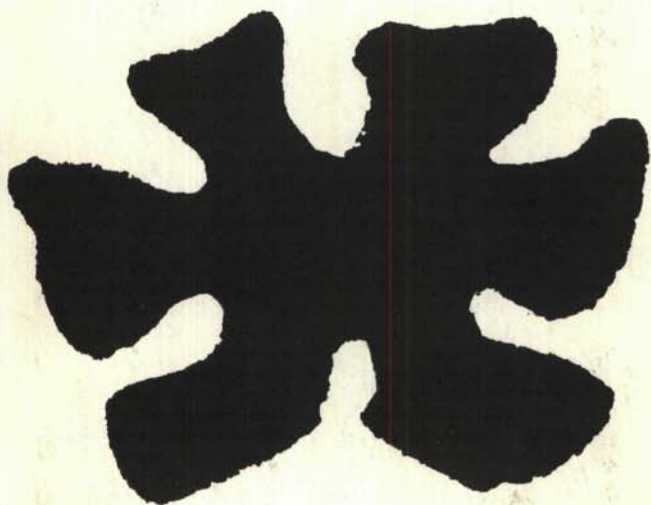
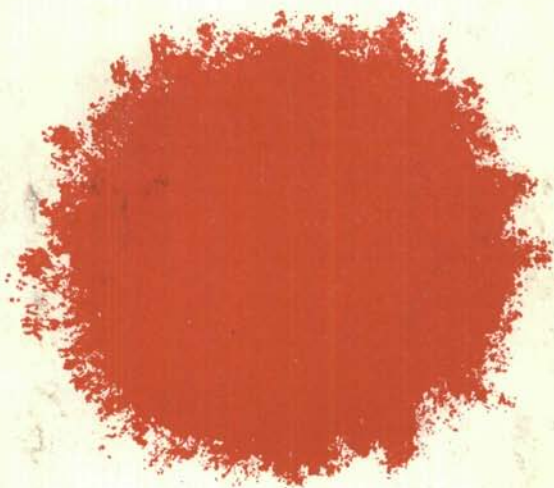


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ROBERT JAY LIFTON, research professor at Yale, having recently published *History and Human Survival*, and *Birds* (a book of cartoon commentary), tells us he is now immersed in the question of American atrocities in Vietnam. . . . "It's no mean feat," says DOTSON RADER, "to wind up a new novel." The novel, *Government Inspected Meat*, is about a male hustler trying to grow up in America. . . . LESLIE FIEDLER's *Being Busted* just came out. . . . MARK JAY MIRSKY asks that we mention "that old chestnut," *Thou Worm Jacob*, his first novel. Parts of his second, *Simcha*, appear in the current *New Directions Annual*. . . . The two poems by JOSEF HANZLIK printed here are translated for Penguin's Modern European Poets series by EWALD OSERS. Mr. Osers has translated over thirty books from Czech and German. . . . YIANNIS RITSOS is now being detained on Samos. . . . "Once trapped in the Seventh Avenue Garment District," says PHILIP L. GREENE, "I escaped to become an English professor and writer." Greene's new novel is "something of a sexperiment," about the female Portnoy. . . . BUS is an Italian artist. . . . Because of the gap between the pace of events and the pace of a quarterly, PR plans to run informal remarks on current issues in the magazine itself and in a monthly newsletter. Further suggestions are invited.

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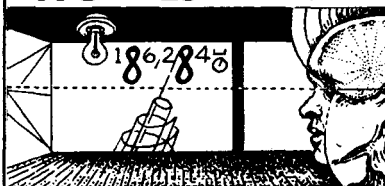
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Robert Jay Lifton

PSYCHOHISTORY

Granted there is such a thing as a “psychohistorical approach,” can we then speak of a “new psychohistory”? If so we had best be tentative. Historians know well — and psychologists should know — that anything now new will soon be old, and that we often label as new (or New) that which does not yet quite exist. As for psychohistory, it is in one sense already old, and in another hardly born.

None can deny the logic of a marriage between psychology and history. Many writers from both traditions have emphasized their common concern with narrative sequence and with the nature of man’s experience in the midst of that sequence. But a certain amount of skepticism about logical marriages (and their offspring) is always in order. And the greater one’s commitment to this marriage, the more convinced one becomes of the impossibility — and undesirability — of an easy union.

I

Skepticism, in fact, is as good a principle as any for approaching psychohistory. Most of us involved in the project are not only critical of traditional psychoanalytic views of history but are skeptical of the kind of pristine cause and effect — and therefore of the kind of knowledge — claimed by any monocausal or hyperreductive approach to history. Our simple commitment to an effort to develop a psychological framework that takes historical currents seriously is itself an act of skepticism toward what I shall soon identify as the ahistorical position of most psychological thought. But this kind of skepticism must be differentiated from the automatic dis-

missal of all psychological approaches to history — and even from the more subtle dismissal of psychological efforts by an insistence upon the inability to “really know” anything significant about the minds of men (great or ordinary) of the past, or about the ways in which current individual and collective ideas and emotions connect with wider historical currents.

We are dealing then with three levels of skepticism: immediate and total rejection (the assumption that the knowledge sought is unobtainable and the whole enterprise futile); anticipated rejection (the attitude, “You have to show me”: implicitly, “I don’t expect or wish to be shown”); and a sense (which I share with a number of colleagues in the enterprise) that the kind of knowledge we seek is extremely refractory, and our methods of seeking it highly vulnerable. This third stance turns out to be in many ways the most skeptical of all.

It is tempting, especially for those with clinical experience, to speak of the forms of skepticism that dismiss out-of-hand, or nearly so, as “resistance.” For the term suggests the kind of psychological force and need that can accompany the rejection. But I think the temptation itself should be “resisted,” because the word also implies — whether used by classical psychoanalysts or Protestant evangelists or Chinese thought-reformers — that there is a true direction or intention that is ultimately, to be accepted, even embraced, once the “resistance” has been overcome. This last assumption, dubious enough when applied to the individual, could be disastrous when applied to history. Moreover, by invoking the term resistance one could all too readily fall into the psychologistic fallacy of explaining away criticism by examining critics’ involvements and needs, thereby avoiding any consideration of the weaknesses of that which is being criticized.

Yet the psychological approach to history does cause discomfort — because it entails formidable problems in method, and because, for many working in both traditions and in other branches of social thought, it threatens to undermine explicit concepts and implicit images about how men behave, why societies change and what constitutes an acceptable professional discipline or “field.” We are all, in other words, formatively bound by our own psychohistorical “place,” and by our activity in that place. And so we should

be, at least to a point, if our skepticism is to be rooted as well as fertile.

But what are the impediments? Why is it so difficult for psychology and history to get together? Generally speaking, I would say that not only do the two traditions often work at cross-purposes, but worse, each has something of an impulse to eliminate the other. And this is so even if we limit our observations to depth psychology and to man-centered history.

For instance, there is in classical psychoanalysis an implicit assumption that the larger historical universe is *nothing but* a manifestation of the projections or emanations of the individual psyche. Or if not that, history is seen as a kind of featureless background for those projections and emanations — something “out there” which is “given,” but which does not significantly influence what is “in here.” The emergence, over the past few decades, of a more developed “ego psychology” has somewhat altered the situation by directing our attention to the influence of the environment on the development of the self. But, as Erikson has pointed out, the grudging and impoverished terms used in the psychoanalytic approach to the environment reveal the approach itself to have remained grudging and impoverished. Moreover, ego psychology has had very little to say about shifts in social ethos central to historical change, especially those related to the new technological environment and its destructive capacities.

Neo-Freudian psychoanalysis has been ahistorical in other ways. More open to the influence of environment, it has for the most part failed to evolve compelling general principles in the social sphere. And where it has actively sought such principles, as in the work of Abram Kardiner, it has tended to view a culture or a society as a more or less cross-sectional entity within which one can study the relationship of social institution and “basic personality,” but not as evolving phenomena whose relationship is importantly defined by change. (Kardiner was aware of the problem, but precisely the historical complexities of advanced Western [specifically American] society proved refractory to the approach he had evolved in the study of primitive societies. Primitive societies too, of course, could have revealed very different insights had they themselves been approached more from the perspective of historical change.) Neo-Freudian psy-

choanalysis thus still finds itself, as much as, or at times even more than, the Freudian tradition it rebelled against, bound by certain limitations of the rationalistic and mechanistic imagery of the nineteenth-century world view. And when psychoanalysis has moved in a phenomenological or existential direction, its intrapsychic insights, however valuable, have tended to be insulated from historical issues.

Historical writing, about which I can speak with considerably less authority, seems (perhaps somewhat analogously) to replace a psychological perspective with common-sense assumptions about human motivation, or else to drown psychological man — that is, the inner life of individual man — in a sea of collectivity.

And yet there is much evidence of a longing from both sides for some kind of union — of widely shared recognition that psychological man lives in a history extending beyond himself, and that history is bound up with conflicts and struggles of the minds of men. Indeed, these two simple principles form the basis for a contemporary psychohistory.

II

I have suggested that the general idea of a psychological approach to history is by no means new. But rather than attempt to document comprehensively the various efforts that have been made in the name of that idea, I would like to focus upon four models (really paradigms) of psychohistory, all of which have emerged in some relationship to the psychoanalytic tradition. Two of them are Freudian, and the other two both draw upon Freud and move away from his historical assumptions.

Freud's most fundamental historical model is not really historical at all, but is rather a *prehistorical* paradigm: the primeval encounter between father and sons, in which the sons rebel against the father's authority and kill him, with the entire encounter psychologically centered around the Oedipus complex. This model was first put forward in *Totem and Taboo* (1912-1913) as an explanation for the origins of society itself, and then again in modified form toward the end of Freud's life in *Moses and Monotheism* (1934-1938), to account for the origins of Jewish religion and Jewish identity — for how, as Freud put it, the "one man, the man Moses . . . created the Jews." Freud saw Moses as a kind of foster father, an Egyptian who "chose" the Jews as his people and gave to them the

gift of monotheism, only to be eventually rejected and murdered by his "chosen people," his symbolic sons.

As Philip Rieff has pointed out, the model here is that of "a certain event, or events, necessarily in remote rather than near history — indeed, at the beginning — become[ing] determinative of all that must follow." Rieff suggests that Freud was influenced by certain facets of Judeo-Christian millennial thought and of German historicism, according to which one crucial Event determines and explains all subsequent, and even previous, history. The principle is that of *Kairos*, of the "decisive moment," as opposed to that of *Chronos*, the more orderly sequence of qualitatively identical units of "mathematical time." Freud's historical Event can be said to be a mythical one — the primeval murder of the father, as allegedly reenacted in the Jews' murder of Moses. But it is also individual-psychological, in the sense of being a product of the Oedipus complex, which is seen as the ultimate source of these decisive occurrences. Indeed one could view Freud's overall historical method as a kind of apologia for the Oedipal Event.

Now there are powerful insights in the two books expressed around this prehistorical encounter, insights that center upon the psychological significance of the perceived historical past for both present and future, and for the movement of history itself. And I shall soon suggest ways in which this model has nourished more recent psychohistorical approaches. But since the model is a mythic one which transcends history as such, it can be profoundly misleading when used to explain specific historical events. (I have in mind particularly a current vogue among psychoanalytic and psychoanalytically-minded observers of looking at recent student rebellions as little more than a repetition of the primeval rebellion of enraged sons against their fathers, as a rebellion explained by — and reducible to — the Oedipus complex. The explanation happens to be congenial to those in authority, the symbolic [or as I prefer, formative] fathers involved. But it totally neglects the larger historical currents that so forcibly intrude upon the psyches of young and old alike, and therefore misrepresents both the individual-psychological and the group processes at play.) For within Freud's prehistoric paradigm there is bequeathed to us an iron mold of psychological repetition (or "repetition-compulsion") enveloping indiscriminately the

individual and the undifferentiated collectivity. When this principle of repetition is seen as the essence of historical experience there can be nothing new in history; indeed, if (in Rieff's paraphrase of Freud) "history is predestination," then there is no history.

The second Freudian paradigm is perhaps the most obvious one, the one most likely to come to mind when people think of a psychoanalytic approach to history; that of individual psychopathology. The best known example here is the Freud-Bullitt biography of Woodrow Wilson, a work which Bullitt almost certainly wrote but which exemplifies the Freudian approach to history more than many present-day followers of Freud would care to admit. In language and quality of thought, the Wilson biography is a vulgarization of the Freudian paradigm — Freud himself never wrote without elegance. But the idea of interpreting the outcomes of major historical events as expressions of the individual psychopathology of a particular national leader — in this case Wilson's struggles with masculinity and his need to fail — was prefigured in Freud's own work. I have in mind not only his treatment of men like Leonardo and Dostoevski (as great artists rather than political leaders), but also Freud's general focus upon individual psychopathology as existing more or less apart from history. When this second paradigm dominates, psychopathology becomes a substitute for the psychohistorical interface. The psychopathological idiom for individual development (so prominent in the literature of psychoanalysis) becomes extended to the point where it serves as the idiom for history, or psychohistory. When this happens there is, once more, no history.

These two Freudian paradigms — the prehistorical confrontation and the leader's individual psychopathology — come together in their assumption that, in one way or another, history represents the intrapsychic struggles of the individual writ large: the same intrapsychic struggles that can be observed by the psychoanalyst in his therapeutic work. For instance, the scenario of *Totem and Taboo* includes not only the murderous rebellion against the father and the consuming of the father in the totem feast, but the subsequent remorse and residual guilt of the sons, and of their sons and daughters ad infinitum, which then reasserts itself periodically in the phenomenon of the "return of the repressed." (I shall not discuss the question of *how* this guilt is transmitted through the generations, or the

problems surrounding the Lamarckian position on inheritance of acquired characteristics which Freud held to throughout his work.) The entire argument derives from an individual-psychological model; and precisely the "return of the repressed" becomes the basis for Freud's view of history as psychological recurrence. And in the individual-psychopathological model, it is the *aberration* of a specific person that is writ large as historical explanation.

No wonder, then, that Freudian models are frustrating to the historian: they interpret but avoid history. They are equally problematic for the historically-minded psychologist. On the one hand Freud's clinical method, as many have pointed out, is entirely historical: it works on the assumption that a man automatically reveals his personal history if he merely lets his mind wander freely, that is, if he engages in free association. And Freud's fundamental discoveries — of the significance of man's individual and collective past — provide the beginning basis for psychohistory. Yet on the other hand these same Freudian principles, when applied with closed-system finality, tend to reduce history to *nothing but recurrence* (or "repetition-compulsion") and thereby to eliminate virtually all that is innovative, or even accumulative, in the story of man.

The Faustian intellectual temptation is to dismiss the paradox and make things simple — either by direct and uncritical application of classical Freudian terms to all manner of historical event, or else by pretending that neither Freud nor the emotional turmoil he described (and himself stimulated) has ever existed. We do better, I am certain, to embrace the paradox. For it can be energizing.

III

Erik Erikson has done just that. He has retained a focus upon the individual — the great man — and upon the kinds of inner conflicts illuminated by the Freudian tradition. But he has placed the great man within a specific historical context: hence the model of *the great man in history*. And with his elaboration of this paradigm something approaching a new psychohistory began to take shape.

Erikson's *Young Man Luther*, a pivotal work for the psychohistorical enterprise, has a direct historical relationship to Freud's

Moses and Monotheism. Apart from Erikson's connection as a young man with the Freudian circle in Vienna, and his continuing identification of himself as a Freudian, his title is meant to echo Freud's phrase (mentioned earlier), "the man Moses." Freud used that same phrase as his original title for the book he later called *Moses and Monotheism*. I might add that Freud's original subtitle was *A Historical Novel*, which suggests an interesting element of self-irony in relationship to a historical method we must now view as highly dubious (I refer to the kind of evidence Freud employed to develop his thesis that Moses was an Egyptian, and that Moses was killed by the Jews). That subtitle has also found another recent echo, probably less intentional — *History as a Novel, The Novel as History* — the subtitle chosen by a promising young existentialist psychohistorian named Norman Mailer for his much-awarded book, *Armies of the Night*. The self-irony in juxtaposing history and fiction does not necessarily suggest that either Freud or Mailer lacked belief in his own views, but rather that each felt himself dealing with a kind of truth that took him beyond conventional historical description. Rather than truth stranger than fiction, each was suggesting a form of fictionalized truth, or perhaps fiction truer than truth.

Returning to Erikson, there are other ways in which his concept of the great man parallels Freud's. At the end of *Moses*, Freud said that "The great man influences his contemporaries in two ways: through his personality and through the idea for which he stands" — an "idea" which may "lay stress on an old group of wishes in the masses, or point to a new aim for their wishes." Freud saw Moses as having taken the Jews to a "higher level of spirituality," largely by means of the "dematerializing" of God and the prohibiting of the worship of a visible form of God. Similarly, Erikson saw as Luther's fundamental achievement, his "new emphasis on man in *inner* conflict and his salvation through introspective perfection" — an achievement and an emphasis Erikson compared with Kierkegaard's existentialism and Freud's psychoanalysis. Freud and Erikson both depicted the great man as a spiritual hero, as a man who achieves an intrapsychic breakthrough.

But Erikson also took several crucial steps away from Freud. Instead of an instinctual idiom — Freud's view of the great man as

appealing to instinctual wishes (particularly aggressive ones) and possessing the ability to bring about in the masses a form of “instinctual renunciation” (control of aggression and “subordinat[ion of] sense perception to abstract ideas”) — Erikson has sought out more specifically *historical* ground, the intersection of individual and collective histories. Luther’s achievement, then, depends not so much upon instinctual renunciation as upon a quality Erikson sees Luther, Gandhi and Freud to have all shared: “a grim willingness to do the dirty work of their ages.”

That “dirty work,” though clearly involved with psychological universals, is historically specific. “We cannot lift a case history out of history,” Erikson also tells us. And he feels constrained to ask of himself and of his readers the kind of immersion he imagines Luther to have had in such early-sixteenth-century matters confronting the young German aspirant to the priesthood as: the contradictions between ideal Catholic spirituality and the “high spiritual finance” of monetary purchase of immortality via the practice of indulgences, the influence of Occamism in Catholic theology, the prevailing child-rearing practices and standards of family (especially father-son) relationships, the discipline of monastic training and the complexities of the Catholic response to the Renaissance. In all this we leave behind Freud’s concept of the traumatic historical event, followed by repression, and then by the “return of the repressed” in the form of guilt and conflict. We concern ourselves instead with the great man’s monumental struggles at the border of religion and politics, with his simultaneous effort to remake himself and his world. For Luther to emerge from his own identity crisis, he had to bring about a shift in the historical identity of his epoch. He had to engage in a desperate effort “to lift his individual patienthood to the level of the universal one, and to try to solve for all what he could not solve for himself alone.”

By “patienthood” Erikson (here following Kierkegaard) means exemplar of ultimate alternatives. And one of the extraordinary qualities of Erikson’s rendition of the young Luther is the book’s painstaking exploration of the very tenuous psychic boundaries between identity crisis, psychosis, theological innovation and individual and historical revitalization. What Erikson has demonstrated — in this study of Luther as in his more recent book on Gandhi — is a

combination of psychoanalytic sensitivity and historical imagination. The combination has been long in coming.

IV

But the great man tends to be inaccessible, at least to direct interviews, or if accessible not yet great. One must usually approach him through records, or, if he belongs to recent history, through interviews with surviving friends and followers. This does not mean that the psychohistorian cannot say useful things on the basis of careful observations from a distance. But when he is centuries removed from the individual he wishes to study in depth, problems of historical reconstruction are inevitable.

Freud faced these problems with the cavalier grandiosity of a genius—as one particularly memorable footnote in *Moses and Monotheism* makes clear:

I am very well aware that in dealing so autocratically and arbitrarily with Biblical tradition — bringing it up to confirm my views when it suits me and unhesitatingly rejecting it when it contradicts me — I am exposing myself to serious methodological criticism and weakening the convincing force of my arguments. But this is the only way in which one can treat material of which one knows definitely that its trustworthiness has been severely impaired by the distorting influence of tendentious purposes. It is to be hoped that I shall find some degree of justification later on, when I come upon the track of these secret motives. Certainty is in any case unattainable and moreover it may be said that every other writer on the subject has adopted the same procedure.

While one cannot but admire Freud's honesty and boldness, the method seems a somewhat dubious one for the aspiring psychohistorian.

Erikson is much more careful with his historical data, but he too runs into difficulties. For instance, he is forced to recreate certain psychological themes of Luther's early family life on the basis of very limited evidence. And problems have also been raised about events in Luther's adult life, notably his celebrated "fit in the choir" during which he made his dramatic statement of negation of identity: "I am *not*!" Erikson himself points out that it is not known whether "Martin roared in Latin or in German," and others have

questioned whether he roared at all — that is, whether the episode actually took place.

Apart from specific problems of reconstruction, there is the larger question concerning the extent to which any individual person, great or otherwise, can exemplify an entire historical epoch — or even (as in Erikson's treatment of Luther) its major collective psychological struggles. The question takes on special force during our unprecedentedly diverse and fickle century, so no less if raised in connection with the past.

Hence the emergence of another recent approach: that of *shared psychohistorical themes*, as observed in men and women exposed to particular kinds of individual and collective experience. Examples here are Kenneth Keniston's studies of alienated, and then activist, American students, and Robert Coles's work with children and adults in the midst of racial antagonism and social change. I have been much concerned with the development of this method and ask indulgence for discussing it in relation to my own work.

I have conducted interview studies of three specific groups of people whose historical exposures seemed to me to have bearing on important characteristics of our era: Chinese and Westerners who underwent Chinese thought reform (or "brainwashing"); Japanese university students during the early sixties; and Hiroshima survivors of the atomic bomb. My focus has been upon themes, forms and images that are in significant ways shared, rather than upon the life of a single person as such.

The shared-themes approach is based upon a psychoanalytically derived stress upon what goes on inside people. But, as compared with Erikson's great-man paradigm, it moves still further from classical analytic tradition. That is, it moves outward from the individual in the direction of collective historical experience. It explicitly rejects the nineteenth-century scientific model of man as a mechanism propelled by quantities of energy — energy internally generated by means of instinctual drives, partially held in check by certain defense mechanisms (notably repression), but eventually erupting in the form of various actions of the individual directed at his outer environment. This instinctual idiom (and, one may say, world view) gives way to a symbolic and formative one.

The shared-themes approach also requires considerable innova-

tion in interview method. For more than fifteen years I have found myself struggling with modifications of the psychiatric and psychoanalytic interview, in order to approach and understand various kinds of people who have not sought therapeutic help but, on the contrary, have been sought out by me. And sought out not because of any form of psychological disturbance as such, but because of particular experiences they have undergone — experiences which may indeed be (and usually have been) disturbing, but which both they and I see as having wider significance than any individual incapacities incurred, psychological or otherwise. I found myself developing a much freer interview style than that I was taught in my professional training. It remains probing, encouraging the widest range of associations, and includes detailed life histories and explorations of dreams. But it focuses upon the specific situation responsible for bringing the two of us (most of the interviews have been individual ones) together, and takes the form of something close to an open dialogue emerging from that situation.

The relationship we develop is neither that of doctor and patient nor of ordinary friends, though at moments it can seem to resemble either. It is more one of shared exploration — mostly of the world of the person sought out, but including a great deal of give-and-take, and more than a little discussion of my own attitudes and interests.¹ It requires, in other words, a combination of humane spontaneity and professional discipline. Needless to say, one's way of combining the two is always idiosyncratic, and always less than ideal.

The method I am describing is partly empirical (in its stress upon specific data from interviews); partly phenomenological, or,

1 We have no good term for the person in this situation. The traditional one, "research subject," seems increasingly unsatisfactory to me because it suggests someone merely "studied" or "investigated" in a more or less passive way. "Patient" is entirely inappropriate, and "client" is not much better. "Historical actor" and "pivotal person" come closer, but they have their own ambiguities. I believe there will be a number of new terms developed, and also new methods of investigation and interview (we already depend, to a much greater extent than my discussion indicates, upon group interviews and a host of other informal approaches) which capture, in *active ways*, lived history. I would go so far as to say that progress in psychohistory depends upon these innovations in method. Once developed in the study of contemporary matters such innovations could also become applicable to the study of the past, though mainly in relationship to the search for and interpretation of various kinds of records and documents.

as I prefer, formative (in its stress upon forms and images that are simultaneously individual and collective); and partly speculative (in its use of interview data, together with many other observations, to posit relationships between man and his history, and to suggest concepts that eliminate the artificial separation of the two). In this speculation the investigator has the advantage of beginning from concrete information that is a product of his own direct perceptions. Recognizing that subjective distortion can make the advantage a mixed blessing, so can it be said that exaggerated concerns with detached objectivity have too often caused us to undervalue what can be learned of history from our direct perceptions.

Within this perspective all shared behavior is seen as simultaneously involved in a trinity of universality (that which is related to the psychobiological quests of all men in all historical epochs), specific cultural emphasis and style (as evolved by a particular people over centuries), and recent and contemporary historical influences (the part of the trinity most likely to be neglected in psychological work). My point is that any shared event is all of these. The weighting of the components may vary, but nothing is *purely* universal, or cultural-historical or contemporary-historical; everything is all three. The overall approach, or at least my sense of it, is most fundamentally influenced by Freud and Erikson, but also by Susanne Langer and Ernst Cassirer, Otto Rank, Albert Camus, Lancelot Law Whyte, David Riesman and R. G. Collingwood; and by Leslie Farber, Kenneth Keniston, Benjamin Schwartz and Philip Rieff.

V

Let me describe my use of the shared-themes approach in six months of research in Hiroshima (in 1962) on the psychological effects of the atomic bomb, and in subsequent writings on that subject. The work centered mainly on intensive interviews with seventy-five atomic bomb survivors, about half of them chosen at random from an official list, the other half specially selected because of their active involvement over the years in atomic bomb problems. Most of the interviews were tape-recorded, and the book I wrote about the work took shape mainly from those interviews and made extensive use of direct quotations to illustrate the death-haunted responses I encountered. But in both the research and the later book

I moved outward from interviews with individual survivors to groups they formed, leaders emerging from among them and social currents in Hiroshima which they both created and were affected by. This in turn required close attention to the post-atomic-bomb history of the city, and to the relationship of that special history to the rest of Japan and to the world at large, as well as to the city's own earlier heritage. A significant part of that history consisted of creative struggles — of writers, painters and filmmakers from both within and without the city — to come to terms with Hiroshima. And these historical and creative struggles were deeply bound up with issues of memorialization and commemoration, with efforts to move beyond the bomb while remaining true to its dead.

Finally, through a detailed elaboration of the ethos of the survivor, I was in some degree able to unite the individual-psychological and historical currents I had observed. I compared survival of the atomic bomb to survival of other massive death immersions — of Nazi persecutions in our time, and of the plagues in the Middle Ages (as the latter reveal themselves through records); as well as to survival of natural disasters, and of the “ordinary” deaths of close friends and family members. I could then (in this and subsequent studies) raise questions about the general importance of the survivor ethos for our age, of the degree to which we have become historically prone to the survivor's retained death imprint, to his death guilt and his psychic numbing (or desensitization to death-dominated images) and to his struggle for significance (or what I call, after Langer, his *formulation*). These questions now intrude into virtually all of my work, and I do not think it is too much to say that they haunt the contemporary imagination.

Thus, in my more recent book, *Revolutionary Immortality*, I discuss Mao Tse-tung's relationship to the Chinese Cultural Revolution in terms of his many experiences of individual and revolutionary survival. I relate his creative use of the survivor state to his extraordinary accomplishments as a leader, and consider the general relevance of death symbolism, in broadest historical perspective, to the present Chinese Cultural Revolution. By connecting certain psychological characteristics of Mao's personal and revolutionary style with the predominant themes of the Cultural Revolution I attempt to combine the great-man and shared-themes approaches.

The central thesis of the book revolves around Mao's anticipation of his own impending death as well as his and his followers' fear of the "death of the revolution." What I see as the overwhelming threat Mao faces is not so much death itself as the suggestion that his "revolutionary works" will not endure. By revolutionary immortality, then, I mean a shared sense of participating in permanent revolutionary ferment, and of transcending individual death by "living on" indefinitely within this continuing revolution. I point out that some such vision has been present in all revolutions, and was directly expressed in Trotsky's principle of "permanent revolution"; but that it has taken on unprecedented intensity in present-day Chinese Communist experience. This quest for revolutionary immortality provides a general framework within which the political and economic struggles and antibureaucratic and antirevisionist assaults of the Cultural Revolution can be examined, without being reduced to a particular psychological or psychopathological trait of anyone.

Also related to that quest is a pattern that reflects the Maoists' excruciating struggles with technology. I call that pattern "psychism," by which I mean an exaggerated reliance upon psychic power as a means of controlling the external environment, an attempt to replace the requirements of technology with pure revolutionary will. Technology is desperately sought, but feelings are cultivated. In this pattern of psychism there is once more a coming together of Mao's personal-revolutionary style—including what Chinese Communist commentators themselves refer to as his "revolutionary romanticism"—and a number of larger currents surrounding the Cultural Revolution. The concept of psychism, like that of revolutionary immortality, is an attempt to say something about precisely that psychohistorical interface.

The book was not based upon the kind of detailed interview approach I described in relationship to my Hiroshima work. Rather, it is a brief, interpretive essay, which draws heavily upon documents and observations by others of the Cultural Revolution as well as upon the writings of Mao, and only upon a very limited number of interviews with participants and observers of the events described. Compared to the Hiroshima study, it is more tenuous and more vulnerable. But I wrote it because I was convinced that

the themes and concepts I develop in it could shed light on a mysteriously explosive social upheaval — and because I thought it a useful experiment in the pursuit of psychohistory.

VI

Yet the post-Freudian paradigms, like the Freudian ones, do not make clear exactly what they “explain,” and fall far short of providing coherent theories of historical causation. The Freudian paradigms, we recall, lean heavily upon instinctual energies and struggles, which inevitably reduce themselves to the Oedipal Event, whether in connection with a prehistorical generational conflict or with the psychopathology of a leading historical actor. Now if broadened, this principle of the Oedipal Event could be made to connect with more inclusive versions of generational impasse, in keeping with Ortega y Gasset’s belief that “the concept of the generation is the most important one in the whole of history.” But Ortega had in mind the “three different and vital times [or twenty-, forty- and sixty-year olds] lodged together in a single external and chronological fragment of time,” which in turn provide an “internal lack of equilibrium,” because of which “history moves, changes, wheels, and flows.” Implicit in Ortega’s view, then, is an examination of the precise nature of these “three different and vital times,” of precisely the historical dimension which Freudian models have tended to ignore.

Erikson’s great-man paradigm looks for historical causation in the leader’s singular capacity, and absolute need, so to speak, to carry history with him as he breaks out from, and transcends, his own demonic intrapsychic conflicts. Since these conflicts are rooted in the leader’s historical period, and his solution affects a great collectivity of his contemporaries as well as subsequent generations, the great-man approach is relatively more specific than the other paradigms in its causal explanations. But we still sense a theoretical gap between the individual and the collectivity which none of the paradigms has fully bridged.

The shared-themes approach is the most diffuse of the four paradigms, though it is in many ways the most attuned to historical complexity. Within it, effect can become virtually indistinguishable from cause. A group understood to be *created* by a particular historical event (the Hiroshima survivors) or by an evolving set of

historical vicissitudes (dissident Japanese or American youth) is also seen simultaneously to *act upon* and affect history — by epitomizing, exacerbating and suggesting something beyond, the immediate conflicts and visions of large numbers of contemporaries. If this kind of explanation, strictly speaking, deals more with historical flow than cause, it at least leaves open many possibilities for more subtle theoretical explorations that relate cause and effect to evolving patterns and directions. Among these future possibilities are additional combinations of the shared-themes and great-man approach; and new ways of conceptualizing radical historical shifts — the breakdown and recreation of the forms of human culture (biological, experiential, institutional, technological, aesthetic, and interpretative) — or what I call a New History.

In both of the post-Freudian paradigms the social theory necessary to bridge the gap between individual and collectivity remains fragmented, implicit, unclear or nonexistent. One solution would be to graft on to either of the two paradigms such relatively established and comprehensive social theory as the neo-Marxist concepts of alienation and overspecialization. Useful as that might be, my own view is that much of the necessary theory shall have to be constructed anew. When approaching intellectual traditions of all kinds, we may do better to draw upon them partially and critically — sometimes even fragmentally — as we construct new combinations of ideas from our continuing investigation of shared psychohistorical themes. Most of all we should avoid that form of professional territoriality which insists that psychological, sociological, and historical realms remain categorically discrete, with each holding fast to an explanatory principle claimed to subsume, or exist independently of, all else.

VII

The concept of revolutionary immortality is part of a more general theory of symbolic immortality I have been attempting to develop, which concerns man's need, in the face of inevitable biological death, to maintain an inner sense of continuity with what has gone on before, and what will go on after, his own individual existence. From this standpoint the *sense* of immortality is much more than denial of death (though it can certainly be bound up with denial). Rather, it is part of compelling, life-enhancing ima-

gery binding each individual person to significant groups and events removed from him in place and time. The sense of immortality may be expressed biologically, by living on through (or in) one's sons and daughters and their sons and daughters; theologically, in the ideas of a life after death, or in other forms of spiritual conquest of death; creatively, or through "works" and influences perceived as persisting beyond biological death; through identification with nature and its infinite extension into time and space (the idea of "eternal nature"); or experientially, through a feeling-state — one I speak of as experiential transcendence — so intense that, at least temporarily, time and death are eliminated (the mode classically employed by mystics).

What I wish to suggest is that this sense of immortality serves as the individual's connection with man's general past and future, as the individual's inner perception of his involvement in what we call the historical process. Much of human history consists of the struggle to achieve, maintain and reaffirm a shared or collective sense of immortality under constantly changing psychic and material conditions.

Generally speaking, imagery of immortality has shifted, over the course of history, from the magical, to the supernatural, to the natural and man-centered — from *literal* promise of eternal life to more *symbolic* expressions of human continuity. One must add, however, that the emerging discussion and practice of "cryonics," the freezing of bodies from the time of death in the hope of later restoring life, returns us to the most literal kind of quest for direct bodily immortality. In any case, the shifting and recombining of modes of immortality mark great turning points in human history. The Darwinian Revolution, for instance, epitomized the shift from the theological to the biological mode, and did so in relation both to man's origins and his destiny. A shift of this kind, of course, can neither be total nor unopposed, and we are still in the midst of its reverberations.

Hiroshima and the subsequent development of nuclear weapons can be viewed as another major shift, perhaps more in the undermining of existing modes of immortality than in any clear suggestion of new combinations. Indeed one way of viewing our present worldwide crisis, in terms other than political, is as a form of radical

psychohistorical dislocation associated with the breakdown of viable modes of symbolic immortality. What has broken down is the sense of connection men have long felt with the vital and nourishing symbols of their cultural traditions, the sense of connection with their own history. Our sense of historical continuity (or of symbolic immortality) is now being profoundly threatened; by simple historical velocity, which subverts the imagery — notably the theological imagery — in which it has been traditionally maintained; and by nuclear and other ultimate weapons which, by their very existence, call into question all modes of immortality. When we consider (more often unconsciously or preconsciously than with clear awareness) the possibility of nuclear or bacteriological warfare, we can hardly be certain of living on in our children or grandchildren, in our works or influences upon others, in some form of theological conquest of death, or even in nature, which we now know to be itself vulnerable to our weapons. The striking contemporary reliance upon the fifth mode of symbolic immortality mentioned earlier, that of experiential transcendence — whether through drugs or other forms of “turned-on” psychic states — may well be a reflection of precisely this decline in our belief in the other four modes. We hunger for both connection and transcendence, and we have need to experiment with the historical and antihistorical boundaries of both.

In America we feel this kind of dislocation profoundly, so much so that we may well be in the vanguard of two specific responses to it. The first, which can have highly malignant consequences, entails an embrace — even deification — of technology as a new mode of immortality through which we seek to perpetuate ourselves. This embrace of technology can be associated with great adventure, and with other forms of imaginative transcendence, as in the case of the space program. But it takes on grotesque contours when the technology involved is that of weaponry. We then witness the development, not only in America but throughout the world, of what I call the religion of nuclearism, an attitude of worship toward weapons of destruction, and a dependence upon them to solve otherwise baffling human problems — ultimately the investment in them of the sense of immortality that has been lost.

A second response to historical dislocation is the emergence of what I call Protean man — by which I mean a relatively new life style,

characterized by interminable exploration and flux, by a self-process capable of relatively easy shifts in belief and identification — a life style that is postmodern and in some ways post-Freudian. Protean man has been created, not only by the dislocations I have mentioned, but by the revolution in mass media as well. I have in mind the flooding of imagery produced by the extraordinary flow of post-modern cultural influences over mass communication networks, so that each individual can be touched, and at times significantly affected, by virtually everything, and presented with endless partial alternatives in every sphere of life, whether superficial messages, undigested cultural elements, or moving evocations.

These two concepts — symbolic immortality and Protean man — provide a way of returning to where we began, to psychologists and historians in the midst of a difficult struggle to create a new psycho-history.

To be sure, the theory of symbolic immortality can hardly resolve the many-sided dilemmas of historical causation. But it does seem to me a potentially useful way of looking at man in history, most specifically as a framework for the study of revolutions and of a variety of related problems of historical continuity and discontinuity. The general point of view seems also to be given force by the death-dominated times in which it emerges; history does much to create the ways in which we, at any particular moment, decide to study it.

Concerning the Protean style, I bring it up, not only as a way of epitomizing contemporary experience, but for another reason as well. Since I believe this style in some degree inhabits us all, I assume further that it affects our relationship to ideas — the ways in which we respond to them, believe them, and attach them to our sense of self. Protean man is continuously open to new ideas and can move among them rather freely. His difficulty lies in giving lasting allegiance to any particular idea or idea-system. And I do not believe that scholars are immune from precisely this pattern. Hence the intellectual restlessness within most disciplines — the dissatisfaction with established concepts, together with the failure of newer concepts of equal authority to appear.

Those working in the area of psychohistory, where established concepts hardly exist, are especially likely to encounter such rest-

lessness, in both their readers and themselves. It will not be easy to discover, and then collectively maintain, the kind of authoritative conceptual principles we have come to expect and depend upon within an intellectual tradition. Moreover, there is a sense in which psychohistory adds to the burdens of a historical discipline already immersed in difficult struggles to replace no longer acceptable nineteenth-century versions of history as clear narrative or epic or inevitable destiny, struggles to come to grips with the convoluted, opaque and deadly actualities of the twentieth century. Psychohistory, at least in the version I have been describing, tends to "complexify" rather than simplify, which I think is as it should be. And Protean tendencies among scholars can render them receptive to the new principles of psychohistory and yet cautious in granting them intellectual authority, which is also as it should be.

Within these uncertainties lie extraordinary possibilities. These too are Protean, and I think one can observe in contemporary man an increasing capacity for coming to what would have previously been viewed as impossible intellectual combinations and innovations. Compared to his predecessors, he is not only less bound by tradition but much more fluid in his potential integration of very diverse conceptual elements. And the new psychohistory — having stated my reservations and qualifications I think I can begin to call it that — emerges as itself a radical investigative response to a radically dislocated historical epoch.

Despite what I speak of as Protean possibilities, and what some perceive as an exotic aura surrounding the idea of psychohistory, all that I have said here and experienced in my investigations militates strongly against facile intellectual efforts or the creation of "instant psychohistorians." To the contrary, the approach seems to require not only a central commitment to one of the disciplines (or a related one) and a considerable knowledge of the other, but something more: a considerable ethical concern with the problems being investigated. Erik Erikson has hardly been neutral in his feelings about Luther's achievements or about what Gandhi's might still mean for the world. Nor has Keniston been neutral about student radicals, Coles about minority-group aspirations nor I about Hiroshima and its legacy. Rather, all of us have been struggling toward ways of acknowledging our involvements and exploring their relationship to

our findings, toward making conceptual use of these very involvements.

The developments I have so far discussed have for the most part come from the psychological direction. This is not because historians have been totally aloof from psychohistory: they have, in fact, produced a number of important studies within it. But at this phase, beginning with Erikson, the focus seems to be upon concepts emerging from the psychoanalytic heritage, even if in great tension with that heritage. No one knows what will happen in the future, but one can be sure that things will change. Psychohistory could be an avenue toward the revitalization of psychoanalysis itself, through which the latter might rediscover its own history and thereby transform itself. Or psychohistory could develop more autonomously and, despite (partly because of) its profound debt to psychoanalysis, separate itself decisively from the ahistorical bias of that tradition.

In the end psychohistory may turn out to be nothing more than a minor intellectual curiosity. Or, as I confess to be my belief, it could develop into a significant body of thought whose evolving ideas will be as compelling as they are difficult to establish. However things turn out, psychohistory will benefit from the disciplined, free spirits, who, whatever their origin, bring their critical imaginations to bear upon it.

Gore Vidal

ALL OUR LIVES

The sun has set behind St. Peter's. The low-swarmling birds are gone. In the west cobalt blue has become neon rose. The moon's dead face reflects the new hidden sun.

I am depressed, partly at time's passage (how did one get so quickly from there to here?), partly at Eric's description of a script conference — in just such a way I once earned my living — and at the glum realization that I forgot to arrange to have sex today. As I write this phrase, I am reminded of a newspaper writer who found distressing my habit of using the phrase "to have sex" instead of "make love." But having sex is a fact and describable, while making love is an illusion and indescribable. I have always thought it wiser and more honest to deal with facts than evoke illusions no matter how self-flattering. Needless to say, one usually does both, but one ought always to try to begin with fact if only to discover exactly where one is.

Where am I? Well, I have gone inside, turned on the lights in the living room, look for comfort to the Amalfitan stone lion which dominates the room (said to be eleventh century, probably stolen from a church), look at the marble head of Jove bought from a dealer now disappeared and wish for the hundredth time that the marble did not so much resemble the Ivory Soap in which I used to carve Parthenon after Parthenon in the third grade.

The room's yellow walls usually cheer me but not now. The unfinished business of Eric, the never-finished business of Marietta, not to mention a long attack on me which a thoughtful friend sent from London. I have glanced at it. Apparently, I am not as committed, as self-revealing, as powerful as *Mailer*. To which I can only

murmur "bullshit." Yet it is strange how our careers seesaw. Ten years ago the English were comparing Mailer unfavorably to me. Whenever I am up, he is down, and the reverse; currently he is very much up for this is the age of writer as subject and Norman is a most appealing subject. He looks like everyone his age. He makes social messes which to our pre-pot whisky-drinking generation are chillingly familiar (incidental intelligence: I have known or known about most of the American writers of my time and I can think of only three who are not — or were not once — alcoholics).

Finally, Norman throws himself so wholeheartedly into current events that the fact he invariably sinks like a stone makes no difference, perhaps is the difference. Certainly his Mr. Magoo approach to history is profoundly endearing, and his perennial threat one day to write that Great Novel (oh, lost, lost, and by *The New York Times Book Review* grieved!) has, with time, become the Great Novel itself. He need do no more; he *is*, until the fashion again changes and he is forgotten with all the rest, good and bad. Personally, we have always got on — the result of a tacit nonaggression pact (though not necessarily one of mutual assistance); after all, each has distressed so many dominations and powers both political and literary that it would be too much for either to have to endure the other's sniping.

I am smiling, as I write. I always smile when I think of Norman. I recall an evening we spent together in New York, discussing his play version of *The Deer Park*, and drinking a good deal. Then I took him uptown to an apartment where Paul Bowles was staying. Norman had never met Bowles, or Allen Ginsberg (then unbearded) and Peter Orlovsky who were also present. Conscious that literary history might be made, Bowles tried to tape the conversation, but, predictably, we all talked at once and only the sharp cries of a large green parrot were ever entirely clear on the playback.

Suddenly, Norman lay down on the floor and shut his eyes. Putting his feet comfortably on Norman's stomach, Ginsberg said, very kindly, "Of course he's crazy."

But memory plays tricks. Although there is often a parrot present when Bowles is at home, I now have an amending memory that the cries on the tape were not a parrot's but Orlovsky's. Others present will no doubt remember, although I have usually found that whenever I read about an occasion where I was present, the

report (except once) never tallies with my own. The once was Jack Kerouac's *The Subterraneans* in which he describes with — to my mind (for what that sieved instrument is worth) — astonishing accuracy an evening he spent with William Burroughs and me. Everything is perfectly recalled until the crucial moment when Jack and I went to bed together at the Chelsea Hotel and, as he told me later, disingenuously, "I forgot." I said he had not. "Well, maybe I wanted to." So much for the tell-it-like-it-is school.

Memoirists, however, are seldom as precise as novelists. I have been reading John Lehmann's autobiography in which he describes our meeting with André Gide. He reports that later I "sighed" because Gide had made no mention of a book I'd sent him when, in actual fact, I had simply wondered if he had ever got the book, not quite the same thing as being disappointed, and all that that implies. Then Lehmann neglects to mention the only interesting thing the Master said. He had just been awarded — to his obvious delight — the Nobel Prize. With a great smile, the deep *Comédie Française* voice intoned, "*Premier le Kinsey Report, et après ça le Prix Nobel.*" He then gave me a copy of *Corydon*, a book which he assured me solemnly he seldom gave anyone. On the fly leaf he wrote *avec le sympathie*, a rather cold dedication according to a knowing French friend.

What else do I remember of Gide? Short, thick chested, with large peasant hands; wearing a dark-green velvet jacket, beret, large round spectacles. He sat at a plain work table surrounded by books on two levels; the upper level reached by stairs. Open in front of him (staged for our benefit?) was a pornographic novel by an Anglican priest recently retired to the English countryside. The pages were beautifully hand-printed, and there were a number of drawings of boys being debauched. With a grin, Gide said he had received the manuscript some time ago but had not yet decided how to answer its priestly author.

"*C'est intéressant, maître?*" I asked.

"*Oui. Mais le style, hélas, c'est un petit peu trop littéraire pour moi.*" Impression: a nervous, malicious intelligence, not very like the somewhat histrionic self-examiner of the *Journals*, forever preparing a brief for the defense to be tried in the court of a Protestant god whose jurisdiction the defense must, in all conscience, deny.

Thinking of Gide, I suddenly wonder why it is that so few

American writers have ever wanted to appear intelligent. Many of course were — and are — not. But those few who could compare in civilization with their European counterparts chose, protectively, to hide their wit as tribute to Demos. “Ahm just a farmer,” drawled Faulkner, while Stephen Spender tells of meeting Hemingway in Spain during the Civil War and listening to him talk intelligently of Stendhal until, realizing that he had been sounding literary and un-American, he quickly reverted to his usual bullying baby talk. Our writers are like city-bred politicians forced through gerrymander to represent rural constituencies.

Part of Norman Mailer’s craftiness was to assume early on the Hemingway life style and manner because it was familiar to the public (and since so little is known to the minority which reads newspapers, an ambitious writer can hardly be faulted for wanting to identify himself with a known archetype like Hemingway, Faulkner, Fitzgerald). Consequently the public has been charmed that the boozing, the brawling, the marrying, all that they have been taught by the press to believe is the necessary behavior of a major writer continues now in Norman, heir to Papa. Unfortunately, Mailer’s intelligence keeps breaking through and one senses that beneath the mask he elects to wear there is a nice Jewish boy (his own phrase) playing desperately at being a Goyisher slob, and hoping that his liver — not to mention nerves — will survive the strain. One wonders what Norman would have been like had he been himself. Faced with much the same problem, Saul Bellow in his first two books tried to write as if traditional English was entirely natural to his ear, then, sensing perhaps that he was playing a part, he shifted ground, began to use his Jewishness to make a language and an art all his own.

Once, to annoy Norman, I asked him why Jewish American writers wrote such bad prose (most of them do, not that anyone cares). Norman took in stride my crude lumping together. “Because,” he said, “they hear such bad English when they’re growing up.”

Gide thought falsity of tone the one thing fatal to a writer. Yet perhaps it is not possible to survive in a society which hates the examination of anything except machinery without becoming a clown, a monster, a performer willing to play any role in order to

reach that vast audience which is the true creator's goal though not, as newspaper writers think (betraying their own interest), for money or glory but for making connection. That is the passion which drives the talent, and the larger the connection the greater the fulfillment.

Examining sales figures with a sharp eye, going into depression at the slightest falling off, Dickens is typical of the artist who finds in the people of his own time the self's true complement. It is perhaps significant that my generation was the last to think of the novelist as central to the culture, with everyone potentially accessible to our art. When this proved not to be true (our medium too "hot"; our readers too "cold"), writers began to act very oddly indeed, running for President, directing films, talking on television.

Fortunately, the rising generation is more modest than we. They know that the novel at its best is for the few, like poetry, and so they are able to survive reasonably content in universities, while we — last of the great dinosaurs — sink into the electronic swamp, our death agonies recorded on television with much fuss.

Beside the review from England, a letter from a Canadian academic saying that the only two characters in literature which no one but an American could have created are Huckleberry Finn and Myra Breckinridge (so much for the white whale!), and a cable from Hollywood: would I like to adapt for the screen Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five*? A nice irony. Vonnegut is, the press tells us, the current favorite of the young, supplanting Golding and Salinger and Tolkien. I think I know why. Though his style is easy to the point of being imbecilic, his creative imagination is — what is the reviewer's phrase? — first rate and fills the need of the young for fantasy, for alternative worlds to this one. Last year they were Tolkien elves, this year they can learn not to fear death because it is simply a violet light and, as creatures from another planet assure us, since one is able to scan one's life at any point, if things are bad in the present simply go backward or forward in time.

It is quite possible that the only fiction that is "necessary" in this time is science fiction which extends a part of the imagination. The pity of course is that the best writers are still involved with the moral aspects of being when the young want only mind-bending stories and — finally — hope of heaven. Yet on this last point serious and popular writing may soon overlap before the game is up. I have

noticed that the one book of mine the young read voluntarily is *Messiah*, largely because it has the look of science fiction as well as dealing with what might be the next world religion.

Significantly the only dead writer much admired today is Herman Hesse, who is forever journeying to the East, translating Zen for the West, and creating protagonists who are young, troubled, marked in a way that only the initiated can see — and what sensitive young person in a suburb of Cincinnati does not believe that he, too, has been singled out, and finds reassurance in Hesse's pages that there are others — though not too many — like himself?

To serve the solipsism of youth has always been a short cut to glory. But though Hesse is not as much to my taste as Thomas Mann (no longer read at all as far as I can determine), he was at least authentic and authenticity is the most one can ask of a writer. Certainly lack of authenticity has made most contemporary work unbearable. When William Styron asked me what I thought of the short stories in the first issues of the *Paris Review* I said, unkindly but accurately, "They are rejects from *The Saturday Evening Post*."

At the time I thought it funny — but now think it sad — that after our war so many nicely-brought-up boys would want, for a time at least, to play at being Artists and start little magazines in Paris, because isn't that what they all did at the end of the First War? Yes, they did. So why not do something else?

Looking back, one can now see that a whole generation set out to imitate an earlier generation, a very strange thing to do — and not just the untalented: even our good writers deliberately put on the masks of their predecessors while those who chose to be themselves, like John Horne Burns, had a bad time of it. Yet whenever I think of the authentic I think of the clumsy but passionate Burns or the meticulous Paul Bowles creating his own landscape and peopling it with characters never seen before in our literature. One feels that those two needed to do what they did — and for that matter Hesse, Tolkien, Golding are equally authentic and, like them or not, this wholeness is what literature is all about, and something quite remote from all those portentous renderings of The American Experience when wife went to bed with best friend on a campus last summer and, oh, the pain and wonder of being Jewish!

I will not adapt *Slaughterhouse Five*, I decide, crumpling the

telegram and setting fire to it in an ashtray . . . cleansing fire, as Heraclitus also of Ephesus knew.

Why, I suddenly wonder, is the legend of Herostratus so appealing? Because it is the destructive side of the Shakespearean proud boast to make a lover immortal with a line of words? Or is it that we come from fire and shall end in fire when the sun flares, and the universe falls back upon itself, as the cycle of creation prepares to begin again (what a splendid image Calvino makes of this in *Cosmicomics*).

Fire was our beginning and still bemuses us even though we ourselves are a heavier, duller element, oblongs of soft skin containing scarlet sea water held upright by a fibrous contraption more suitable for a vegetable than for such a proud sentience as man.

Recently I dreamed of my father who died and was cremated last winter. He was seated in some sort of a funicular car moving slowly opposite to me. As we came abreast of one another, I saw with dull horror that he was dead and where his eyes should have been there were bright flames. Ultimate fate of watery creatures in a fiery universe.

* * *

The attraction of old movies is not so much the pleasure one gets in seeing long dead actors come alive as in the glimpses one gets of *real* things: an actual street scene of fifty years ago, with real people hurrying about their business, unaware of the camera, not knowing or caring perhaps that long after they are dead, shadows of themselves at a given time and place can be watched by those who were not even born at that selected moment when Forty-Second Street was so urgently crossed at the lunch hour, and preserved on celluloid.

A few years ago I wandered into a Translux newsreel theater just as an old *March of Time* was being shown. The year was 1935. I watched without much interest until I saw a familiar building: the Department of Commerce in Washington. Then my father appeared on the screen, and I had the sense of sinking without support into the past, nothing to hold onto, like that constant recurring nightmare of being back at school or in the army and no one will believe that one has meanwhile grown up, become a civilian.

I forget the subject of the film. In those days my father was much photographed, usually advancing aviation in Roosevelt's administration and out. What struck me as he talked to the camera was his youth. The hair which I had known for so many years as white was hardly gray. He was younger than I was watching him. I was both present in the theater and present in his office (as I looked past him at the room, I knew which was the door to the bathroom and which to the secretary's office, recognized the model planes I used to play with in front of tall windows on whose ledges — out of view — starlings by the thousands lived, etiolating federal property).

I was both child and man as the film progressed, in two places at once, two continua — and at the end, in a scene showing my father at an airport, I saw with sharp nostalgia that it was high summer in the prewar world, the sort of day on which we would all drive to Glen Echo amusement park, passing enroute a piggery whose smell never failed to horrify and delight me.

Richard Poirier

**WHAT IS ENGLISH STUDIES,
AND IF YOU KNOW WHAT THAT IS,
WHAT IS ENGLISH LITERATURE?**

Some measure of distortion is probably inescapable in any effort to “teach” literature in a classroom, a relatively new and strange thing to do anyway. Still, it’s possible to be discriminating even about necessary distortions, and those occurring in the classroom study of literature increase in direct proportion, I suspect, to the claims made for it’s transforming the lives of teachers, students, communities and even, such is the ambition, the shape of history. What I’m referring to, in part, are current demands, not new for being current, that the enterprise of English studies be made more “relevant.” The term is in itself a cause of confusion. For if English studies is to become more “relevant” to anything, shouldn’t it be first of all made more “relevant” to English literature? And yet before that can happen, isn’t it necessary to decide what English literature is (if you believe, as I don’t, that it’s a “thing”) or what you want it to be (if you’re convinced, as I am, that it’s an invention and can be reinvented at convenience).

Questions about “relevance” presume some agreement about the shape of that invention and therefore about the resources in it now to be committed in some new way. Yet prior to any plans for investment in “relevance” is the persistent problem of none of us knowing—I’m including myself as a teacher in these strictures—what there is to be invested. There’s no agreement, as there is in most other academic disciplines, even about the possible sources of revenue—Smollett as well as Cleaver?—because there’s no agreement about *how* we are to look at the terrain, much less how any resources are to be gotten from it. English literature doesn’t exist

independently of some mode of apprehending it. And what ideally should that be? "What is poetry," Gertrude Stein once asked, "and if you know what poetry is, what is prose?" Since she was, as I am, raising questions as a restraint against passing beyond them to larger ones, she immediately adds that "there is no use telling more than you know, no, not even if you do not know it." Few really intelligent people would be anything but cautious in answering such questions, but then there are remarkably few intelligent people, and not all of them are in departments of literature.

What I want to suggest is that all the elements in what is called English studies are, or ought to be, in motion, including the student and the teacher. A beautifully liberating instability, a relativity rather than a "relevance," should be all we know and all we need to know about English studies. And yet these inherent opportunities are generally disdained in the interest of grandiosities and pomposities and large claims. Those who defend English as a humanistic scholarly discipline, the traditionalists, as they might be called, are as implicated as those who want the teaching or study of literature turned into a function of personal and political redemption. It's no surprise that last year's dissidents are this year being recognized, vocally as well as tacitly, as allies within the literary-academic establishment. (The smarter traditionalists of the Modern Language Association know their butter well enough not to care, for awhile, which side of the bread it's on.)

The most vocal critics of English studies are excited by the same illusions which bolster its most vocal defenders: the illusion, first, of the necessity, and, second, of the enormous importance of literary studies. These illusions, shared in some degree by anyone involved in literary study, are difficult but necessary to resist. They intrude themselves because the study is confused with the subject, the teaching confused with the thing taught, the teacher, very often, with the author, whom he is "making available" to the young and to himself. It's a heady experience, after all, to have a direct line to Shakespeare, especially when its assumed there's only one. Because of these confusions, the study of literature is supposed to have some effect on the quality of life. So, it can be argued, is the study of sociology or the study of history, but English studies blithely appropriates these subjects at its convenience, while at the same time

insisting on the invulnerability of its own materials. Enterprises in the humanities, of which literary study is preeminent, have been considered especially valuable, then, in ways not unarguably belonging to literature itself: as a conditioning of the sensibility with respect to what are called "concrete" human situations; as a humanizing, civilizing influence in that it bears witness to the irresolvable perplexities of living in time and to the magnificent thrusts of human energy as it tries to transcend time. A long held assumption about literature has become the presumption of literary study: that it makes us conscious of the heroism of transcendence. Not merely the fictional hero but the writer himself, in his acts of creation, tries to establish realms freed of the contamination and erosions of time, tries to create forms that will become fuller and more beautiful from the accretions of time.

Literary study has come increasingly to depend on this way of thinking about literature. Classroom teachers are not, however, responsible for inventing this view of literature and are only beginning to inquire into the premises behind it. Of the many sources, a notably eloquent one is Henry James, Jr. of the *Prefaces* and of "The Art of Fiction," and Henry James, Jr. is not at all popular (though Sr. may soon, for good reason, become fashionable) with those who cry out against the irrelevance and disgrace of literary scholarship. It's therefore instructive, in seeing, again, how apparently dissident factions are closer to the traditionalists than they'd like to imagine, to note in Herbert Marcuse a position somewhat analogous to the younger James's. For Marcuse, art and literature are essentially higher forms of life. They are attached to historical or daily life by virtue of a provocative alienation, a challenge to the way things really are. Art contains, he says, "the rationality of negation. In its advanced positions, it is the Great Refusal—the protest against that which is. The modes in which man and things as they are made to appear, to sing and sound and speak are modes of refuting, breaking and recreating their factual existence." However, he argues, society has found the means—in the mass production and distribution of high culture—to assimilate and coopt the essentially antagonistic contents of literature. Surely the invention of literary studies, the whole idea of making works of art available to a classless class, is a prime instance of this cooption.

My disagreement with Marcuse is two-fold—with his conception of literary works and, consequently, with his idea of the necessary antagonism between them and society, including that social unit, ideally operative, which is a class studying a book. As for the first, literature in Marcuse is a kind of “world elsewhere.” And (as I’ve already tried to suggest in a work of that title) it never can be. Given the nature of language and its deterministic social forms, no book can, for very long, separate itself from this world; it can only try to do so, through magnificent exertions of style lasting only for the length of the exertion. We are left to admire the effort, to lament, if we wish, the evanescent achievement. So that I would have to argue also against Marcuse’s theory of the dangers of the assimilation of literature and of its antagonistic contents. The dangers *are* the glory; they are inherent in the very shape and materials of literary works. The alleged “assimilation” is the prior condition of the existence of the work of art, the very act by which one man tries to address another: the prior assumption of the whole exchange being a shared need for the forms in which they communicate, or think they do.

This condition of literature opens the way to a vigorous form of literary study. Admiration for, exploration into the effort which is literature, the act which is writing—these are what is mostly now missing from the study of literature. Literary works only provisionally constitute what Marcuse calls “another dimension of reality.” They should be construed more properly as merely another dimension of action, of performance with language as its medium. Thereby we escape the contradiction that the ultimate logic of thinking of literature as a form of reality, with an exonerated status, is that it shouldn’t be taught at all, that teaching only assimilates it into life as presently arranged, democratizes and thus degrades (and deradicalizes) it. However, it still is taught under the assumption of its being “another dimension of reality”; it is meddled with, made available through all sorts of cheapening and mechanical devices, as if its integrity could only be perserved by violating it. In a perhaps crude shortcut to clarification, let me suggest that no man proud of deflowering a virgin would continue, unless he were mad, to introduce her as one. English studies cannot do what it most often does to literary works and pretend that these works still belong unto themselves or to English literature. They belong, all marked up, to

English studies. Talk about the ultimate heresy of paraphrase or claims that the mechanics of *topoi* gathering are merely procedural, the necessary preparation for other and more important work—these are only bits of conscience money that critics pay themselves and do little to ameliorate the profound impressions made on the minds of students and on teachers' minds by some of the insistent methods of literary study. Much of the classroom study of literature appears unfortunately destined to make all energies of response subservient to structures, with emphasis on the coherence resulting from recurrence of patterns, and with a corresponding deemphasis on any discordant elements, except where these can be included as irony or as some as yet unidentified sub-subgenre.

My attack is less on the so-called new criticism or on the "anatomy of criticism" or on relevance seekers than on classroom versions of these and on the consequences, personal, political and literary, that follow from the classroom. As for the "new criticism," it is being treated, unfairly, as the villain of the piece anyway, despite far too casual acknowledgments that it was needed at the time as an antidote to anachronistic historical methods. Before it was fashioned into an instrument, the new criticism was itself more complex and liberating than it is now made out to be, especially as practiced by Ransom (who had the misfortune to coin the title), by Tate, by Warren and by Brooks (who took on the responsibility for translating extraordinarily supple critical formulations into a terminology and method fit for pedagogical use). And besides, all of these men, along with others of the Southern Agrarian movement, talked a politics, in *I'll Take My Stand* and elsewhere, with many of the radical, indeed Marcusean overtones, that are the reverse of the politics now ascribed to them. Their positive inclination, still immensely beneficial, was to finagle students into the work and then ask them to care about what was happening to its (and to their) language. This inclination derived in part from the classical training of the mostly Southern advocates of this kind of analysis, and derived, too, from a taste for conversational piquancy, for what Frost calls "sentence sounds." It can be fancied that this taste developed easiest in the rather close, familial, noncosmopolitan societies which these critics also tend to favor as social organizations of life, groupings in which one might learn to "read" as much through the ear as through

the eye. From the first — this care about the derivation of words — comes an emphasis on the culture encapsulated in language, preserved there and mined by digging for puns and connotations; from the second — a concern for heard speech — may come the emphasis on tone and dramatic situation in the reading of literature. Given other possible sources, from Richards, Graves, Empson, one can only guess about lines of emergence and development. The important point is simply that these notions were not necessarily political in origin and that their assumed political effect, once they became classroom practice, can't easily be translated into the political thinking of men like Robert Penn Warren.

All such cautions allowed, however, the history of these ideas, and of related ones of "objective correlative" and organicism, is less important than are the consequences of their having been packaged, with something like urgency, for distribution in class. I say "packaged" because there are other critics — Blackmur, Burke, Brower, Empson and Trilling are among them — whose work doesn't submit to methodologizing. Neither, for all his enormous influence, does Leavis, about whom I'll have more to say later. The history of literary criticism is, fortunately, not the same thing as the history of pedagogy, and it is to this last that I'm addressing myself. Indeed it isn't the fault of T. S. Eliot, or Coleridge, Emerson or even Longinus, that the idea of organicism, really several contradictory ideas, is of enormous pedagogical convenience. It's rather that organicism, as usually interpreted, promises that a student, by commendably energetic local attentions will, if his responses are "responsible to the text," put together a puzzle at the end. All the better if that puzzle can be completed in the fifty or sixty minutes of a classroom hour. The implications of this emphasis have been historically as well as politically important to literature. One result has been the promotion of those works lending themselves easily for illustration, and a corresponding evasiveness about the status of those that don't. Why do students know more about Donne than about Jonson, more of the relatively trivial than of the mysterious Marvell of "Upon Appleton House," more of Keats than of Shelley; why do they all, to the last million, seem to have read *Dubliners* instead of some collected stories of Lawrence? What "goes well," what "works" in class has had an enormous and rigidifying effect on the shape of literary

history during the last twenty or thirty years. I doubt that most of those now crying for "relevance" are going to be any less utilitarian in the selection of the works and writers they promote. The list will simply be different. Like the new critics, but for other reasons, they, too, believe in "works" more than in "writing," in books rather than in those manifestations of energy one might call *écriture*.

To say that the implications of the classroom study of literature are political, simply means that any concern for language and for the structures of imagination is now in some sense inescapably so. English studies is susceptible, though by no means so directly, to the kind of analysis of methods to which the social sciences have been subjected by C. Wright Mills and Noam Chomsky. Because literary studies can't claim, as can history and sociology, a very direct transmission of its findings into political consideration, any inquiry into the politics lurking in its practices is necessarily both more tentative, however, and far more risky than even Chomsky's have proved to be. It is nonetheless a necessary inquiry, though one must be on guard against reductiveness or imputation of motive or self-righteousness. The nature of the conditions I'm describing means that no one is innocent and that all descriptions, in the effort to explore the implications of a practice, must in some sense be unfair to the practitioners. Those opposed to any political interpretation of English studies can claim, quite understandably, that their intellectual conduct in class or in literary journals or as members of literary-academic organizations is susceptible to political interpretation only if they have intended it to be. I hope I've suggested that they do have an argument: I happen not to think it a very convincing or a very self-inquiring one.

For that reason, I found the disagreement in 1968 about whether or not MLA should meet in 1969 in Chicago merely symptomatic of a larger and persisting one: that we are now in a cultural situation wherein political meanings get expressed even in the effort to evade them. Those who wish this were not so have the sympathy of those who regret that it is; but those whose response is some genteel pretention that they are serving themselves and civilization by merely "doing their own work" with literature as they have always done it are deluding themselves. The "same" work is different from what it was even a few years ago, for the reason that

so much has changed around it. The framers of the MLA ballot designed to poll the members about a 1970 meeting in Chicago did not recognize the changed contexts for words that a few months earlier would have been neutral enough. They were appalled at the evidence that their language expressed intentions they hadn't at all meant to express. How did it happen that their wording confused hotel space with political space and implied a primary concern with the former? The critics of the ballot were astonished, perhaps in my own case too self-righteously so, that anyone committed to the study of language could think it possible, in the fall of 1968, to say or write anything, especially on such a subject as Chicago, which would not invite political readings.

That's a small example of what's meant by saying that no one speaks as he once did and means what he once did: the word Chicago had been made a political word. It was no longer simply a geographic one. And it had been changed, that word, not by an Academy, but by the Mayor of Chicago. He had made a geographic designation into a politically dirty word and an association of language teachers was somehow supposed to ignore this fact about its own language. Anyone could have been angered by this without being aligned with the New University Conference (often described as a faculty version of SDS), its proposals or its politics, though the Chicago issue had the effect of greatly strengthening this grouping. Anyone could have responded as I did who simply acted upon what the MLA says it stands for — a devotion to literature and language. The exercise of which didn't require even the reading of politically "relevant" pamphlets but only, as a prelude to an encounter with political language, some intense and alive reading of any writing of any kind. It meant a developed capacity for watching performances in language, the actions of words. What the difference about Chicago revealed was a naïveté, especially in an organization with a declared "devotion" to language, about the necessity to treat language almost as an antagonist, to struggle, to fight for control of it, knowing that if you don't it can be given meanings that without your even guessing it will take control of you. The only condition for avoiding disruption in MLA was for all of its members to accept, as a necessary general condition, the very special condition by which Mayor Daley tried to prevent the expression of struggle and dissent

in his city. One needn't have been a schoolboy Marxist to recognize the process.

Literary study might well consist of such "lessons" in how to meet and know words under different kinds of social and historical stress. The point would be that any given expression in words has to be confronted as if meant pointedly, personally for *you*, meant as a violation, pleasurable or otherwise, of the self you'd put together before this shape of words entered into it and before the self in turn, with all its biases, cautions, histories, moved reciprocally back into those words. Literary study should show how in this engagement words can sicken and befoul, heal and uplift us, and how precarious and momentary each such induced state can be. A class can watch how words suddenly get snatched from our possession and are so recast that we don't want to possess them any more. This active way of responding to language and to the structures of imagination that are made from it is not, alas, what goes on in the classrooms of our colleges and universities. There's little effort to show how words and what is shaped by them are transformed in their passage through various contexts.

There's a lot of talk about "context" to be sure, but the word refers most often to the "work," whatever that is imagined to be, or some part of it, or to the genre of the work or to the historical pressures of the time, whatever those are supposed to be. But what about the "context" wherein the cluster of words is received — that odd place known as a classroom with all those ratty chairs and an actor up front? What about that "context" which is the reader himself and the various other "contexts" he carries in him to the context of the campus and the classroom? "Contexts" swirl around and in and out of the writing being looked at and listened to even before we begin pretending that we can firm up a literary or historical context of an authorized kind.

We ourselves, each of us, insofar as we are composed in and by language, should be as much the subject of literary studies as is any literary work similarly composed. The confrontation of these two kinds of composition — that should be the substance of our work. It's murderously hard work, however, except for those who take for granted the self known as the reader or for those satisfied with the almost invariably slapdash compositions of a self put together for any

given discussion of political relevance. It's terribly difficult to find out who one is during an act of reading or to help a student find out who he or she is. It's maybe harder now than ever before: there are so many assaults on human vulnerability that, to survive at all, we become invulnerable, and then in order to seem worthy to ourselves pretend, again, to vulnerability. Hence the danger, dangerous to one's continuing and fluid self-creation, in any simple effort to attain "relevance" in literary study. What is relevant to what and where do we begin to stabilize one element in order to let it somehow feel the force of another?

For anyone teaching literature the problem is especially complicated if, as nearly all of us have, he has been educated to see things through the gridiron of one theory or another, especially a theory that has been turned into a method. Take the habit of thinking of literature organically, along with implicitly high valuations of society which is also ideally organic. It is perhaps a necessary comfort and pleasure of the imagination, a game of making oneself at home with words and images. But it is an expensive game, and there are denials in it not everyone thinks any longer worthwhile. What's missing from the habit, of course, is yourself or, more properly, yourselves and some true part of the will toward disorganization and freedom from pattern. What, indeed, are patterns for, when, if technology is frightful, it also proves inspiring to the point of awe; or when the excitements offered in forms that compete with literature and that are dismissed by left-liberal litterateurs as camp or pop or worse, are sometimes better, in that they do more to and for us, than are some works set for literary survey courses; or when the brutality and violence against which the humanities are somehow supposed to promote a civilized abhorrence also exhilarate us to the extent that we then look back at literature itself and wonder how much of the best of it isn't really to some degree pornographic in its resourceful brutality. I mean that phrase very precisely as applied, let's say, to Shakespeare and James in their "use" of characters as merely one of many expressive, "compositional" resources. As against these liberating and confusing and contradictory realizations, literary study too often asks the reader to exist importantly only when he can find himself in a structure, a structure which exists at times even at the expense of some of the most exciting *writing* in a work.

Imagine, as an instance, someone saying that he admires the

political activism of youth, but finds he cannot wholly understand it or participate in it. Why? Because, he says, youthful dissent is dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible; because it is in excess of the facts as they appear. This is not, as you might think, a quote from George Kennan. It is from T. S. Eliot in his formulation of the term "objective correlative." He is talking about what might be called by certain critics, equally satisfied with pacification, the *topoi* of SDS, namely Hamlet. It matters, but not much, that the idea of objective correlative is as old as Poe and probably derivative of Washington Allston's 1850 "Lectures on Art." Given what Eliot himself called in 1966, not many years ago, its "truly embarrassing success in the world," what matters most about the term is its effect on us and its effect, still, in helping promote simplistic and repressive notions of depersonalization, unified sensibility and organicism. (If any political equivalences are thought out of order here, consider the night in 1969 at the Village Gate when Norman Mailer, later to propose that New York City be broken up into organically functioning sections, opened his campaign with a staccatoed charge that New York City lacked "an objective correlative." Though Mailer felt it necessary to identify the author of the phrase, Jimmy Breslin was perhaps on that occasion more accurate in complaining, privately, that he hadn't known he was running on a ticket with Ezra Pound.)

In any case, the effect of Eliot's too easily appropriated critical terminology, as distinct always from the marvelously *unstabilizing* intelligence at work in his critical writing and in his poetry, is to insist that feelings be grounded, secured, made explicable within structures of "unified sensibility." Such terminologies are what the academy has chosen to extract from Eliot and to mold into a critical system designed to take care of what might be called discordant or dissident elements. The effort in classroom criticism has been to make the student find a design by which these elements, including his own offbeat reactions, can be accommodated. Otherwise forget them, at least in class. "At every stage," Allen Tate cozily suggests, "we may pause to state the meanings so far apprehended, and at every stage the meanings will be coherent." Of course they will, if the critic has decided beforehand that it is right and good that they should be. Coherence, as I've suggested, is a virtue, a comfort we hope for, look for, but why need it have become the primary criterion in

literary study? So much so that the conception of literature is itself tied to an idea of "works," which can be coherent, rather than to a feeling for "writing," an act in which there are various and mysterious exertions of energy? The search for coherence has been mostly a disservice to the very classics in which modern critics have been most eager to find it: *Moby Dick*, *The Waste Land*, and *Ulysses*. Why not cultivate the protean reader to match that emerging type of ourselves which Robert Lifton calls "the protean man"?

I am afraid that such a man would be no more assisted by a literary education conducted along lines laid down by Northrop Frye than he would along those extrapolated from Eliot, at his most formulaic, the Southern Agrarians or even Arnold — there being in each case a different degree of "spatialization" of literature and of possible responses to it. Frye can be commended for many things, and one of these is his skepticism about the Arnoldian exaltation of great works of literature as religious or political creed. Instead, he proposes that culture be treated as "the total body of imaginative hypothesis in a society and its tradition." Note, however, that he still prefers to believe in the word "body" as applied to works of imagination, to believe in a corpus of work, however enlarged, as the subject of study. There is still to be a "field," in which, as Alvin Kibel has pointed out, the relations of literature to primal fantasies are logical and not chronological. Predictably, he distrusts literary study which tries, in conjunction with psychology and anthropology, to understand works of art as the expression not of a necessarily coherent self, but of an anarchic one, a self frustrated rather than helped in expressing itself by the dominant modes of civilization or by literary forms.

Frye can be a very liberating critic, both in range and perspective, as when he remarks that "in Shakespeare the meaning of the play is the play, there being nothing to be abstracted from the total experience of the play. Progress in grasping the meaning is progress not in seeing more in the play, but in seeing more of it." And yet, as Reuben Brower has shrewdly noted, "progress" in Frye means not something about the accumulated experience, the dynamic unfolding of experience in the reader and in the work, of flashes of life. He means instead a progress that distances us from the play, that takes us on a spatial excursion from "the individual plays to the

class of things called plays," and then on "to the 'meaning' of the drama as a whole." Frye leaves even less room than do adherents of "understanding poetry" for measuring or even allowing an unmeasured response to the *activity* which is reading and writing, the energy generated in a reader by some corresponding expenditure in the writer.

Looking into modern criticism in English for someone who will help in this matter and who has had some influence on the classroom study of literature, I would suggest Leavis, not because he is alone — I've mentioned others — but because his claims for "relevance" have been so pronounced and so articulated. Along with Blackmur, quite unlike him in so many other ways, he has been exceptional in his superiority to any mere talk about meanings; he hasn't thought of his principal job as interpretation at all, as a search for significances and the complication of these by ambiguities, ironies and paradoxes. Of course Leavis likes to insist, notoriously, that what's going on as he confronts a poem is really "there" in it, and he's seriously deficient where Frye is most useful. While Frye is happy to treat the genre of any work as "an essential part of the critical context," the context for Leavis is nearly always only the language of the work itself, though by language he means not simply words on a page but the accumulations from literature each word carries with it.

Still, the impressive "relevance" of Leavis — a favorite word of his with meanings that are only rarely approximated in current uses of it — and the claims to "relevance" which he makes for certain writings are indistinguishable from a thirst for verbal confrontation and intensity, a thirst for what he calls "life." Life for him is evidenced in the very effort of expression, an effort the more powerful in writers aware of oppositions, in the resistant, time-ridden nature of language, to anything but the most fashionable and facile modes of expression. There's something Maileresque (and Mailer has some aperçus about Leavis in his review of Norman Podhoretz) in the degree to which Leavis imagines that the historical context really is himself as a reader and writer; however much the poem is "there," it is he who decides, dogmatically as well as deliberately, that it should be "there," along with the extent to which it makes proper use of the resources of its language; however much he locates a

"great tradition" it is a tradition of his preferences, with quite outrageous exclusions, and with inclusions, when it comes to American literature, that are merely loveable. Above all he is present everywhere in his writing. There is a personality, tense with life, at work in his sentences, all of them full of quick insinuation, and with such aristocratic refusal of self-explication that, in their breathless, witty, suspended momentum, points are condensed and subordinated — as in his unsurpassed early pieces on Eliot — which his detractors still remain incapable of reaching. For him, English literature, English culture, England itself can be found in the performed condition of the English language, with its incommensurable resources. One reason he's feared and mocked is that few teachers know what to make of this sort of personal energy, know what life and learning it offers. Most teachers look in criticism for the goods, to put it bluntly, delivered up, wrapped for carrying to class. Literary study as practised by Leavis or by Blackmur, is, for them, far too contaminated by personal testimony; he insists on preferences because he lives in and of a particular time and thinks of writing as an act going on or being repeated in that time.

I have brought up Leavis and a few others only to suggest that there has been at least some activity within English criticism, though not of the kind that's most easily snatched, which can be an alternative to any simple and, to that extent damaging application of a criterion of "relevance." Insofar as the issue touches on popular culture there are also, of course, the estimable works of Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart. By too simple a use of the word "relevance" I mean, for example, that after agreeing with Benjamin DeMott that "we have to move away from the idea that English is a body of knowledge," I can't go on to say with him, if *Time* magazine reports him correctly (and from his other statements on the matter in *Supergrow* I can assume it does), that "we have to produce readers who think of literature as a valuable resource for the exploration of life's problems." Actually, the readers I'd want to produce would be immediately bewildered by Mr. DeMott's language, since surely a reader's first concern is with the primary resource of literature, which is language itself. In what sense is literature a "resource" for exploration except through some ways of first exploring what goes on in language, any form of language, includ-

ing conversation? There's very little evidence, I think, that people of conventionally achieved literary culture or people who produce literature are any better at "the exploration of life's problems" than are some, and not a few, who cannot read or write. Those who write simply ask us to take their language in that rather than in some other form. The form makes them neither better nor worse with respect to "life."

Most calls for "relevance" now being heard manifest a perfectly clear and familiar intention: namely, that English studies is, once again, to be no more than a conveyor belt for the transmission into life of those parts of English literature which can be considered relevant to it. What about any parts of English literature that can't be made "relevant"? Do such writings (let's say "Lycidas" as a pastoral poem, since Mr. Louis Kampf, now First Vice-President of MLA, seems almost as exercised, in "The Scandal of Literary Scholarship," by the damned irrelevance of pastoral conventions in the teaching of that poem as by the reported appearance of a new journal devoted to the study of Henry James, Jr.) — do such writings constitute literature even if they *are* irrelevant to life's problems? Or another question. If one work is relevant to more of these problems than is another, does it therefore have measurably more of literature in it? Mr. Kampf's faith in the possible saving consequences of reading literature in a relevant way is quite literally disarming: "What relevance," he asks, "has the physicist's love of Marcel Proust to his work on missiles? If the love were real, he would, I assume, stop working on them." I'm afraid I don't see why this should be so. If the suppositious physicist hadn't already stopped out of love for his family or his dog, why should he stop for Marcel Proust? Are we to believe that literature's relevance to life is finally a matter of it's being more relevant *than* life? Nor does one need George Steiner's operatic pronouncements that the humanistic tradition of literature somehow failed to prevent the gas chambers. While I never knew of any presumptive relationship anyway, Steiner apparently did, so that he can discover that "We now know that a man can read Goethe or Rilke in the evening—and go to his day's work at Auschwitz in the morning." Anyone can propose such connections but they don't happen to be necessary ones. Literature and, by extension, literary studies may have enormous powers, but we

don't know of what they consist or how they could fail or succeed, and neither do the champions, disappointed or expectant, of relevance.

Locating the relevance of a literary work to any life or to any issue is an extraordinarily difficult and precarious job, even for those who have shown some talent for it. As a motive for English studies it is becoming perhaps insurmountably difficult. The reason is that in every area of expression there is now at work an accelerated deterioration of language — the very assertion itself has become banal — a nearly total cynicism about the adaptation, in the pursuit of power and profit, of any vocabularies, even antagonistic ones, that suit one's purpose. The speeches of Vice President Agnew are a brilliant example of this willingness to appropriate the rhetoric of your enemies in the act of defeating them. His talk on media could have been, with only a few changes, a New Left position paper; his talk on universities made me wonder, paranoically, if the remarkable lady who does his research and helps with his speeches, hadn't adapted some things I'd said about youth and universities in a piece called "The War Against the Young." I wasn't surprised by his credits to George Kennan or Irving Kristol or Walter Lacquer or Arnold Beichmann — and apparently neither were they — but it was genuinely frightening to note how language so nearly one's own, and of a quite other political complexion, could be adapted to an argument so pernicious as Agnew's and so remote in intention from mine. Herein is a lesson for those who like to imagine the power of the word or of literature: power as a property, power of the kind at Agnew's command, can do what it wants with language, and language can do pathetically little to it.

What, then, is anyone to do who thinks of himself as a custodian not so much of language in the abstract but simply of his own language? How can he begin to dislocate language into his own meaning? I am conscious, in adapting a phrase from Eliot, that literature has always been in some sense a struggle to do this — which is why the pastoral elements of "Lycidas" could, by the way, be made to seem quite relevant to contemporary problems of expression. No one can think, however, that the problem has become anything but desperate in the last twenty years. The "struggle for verbal consciousness," Lawrence insisted, "should not be left out of art." It should now be the central concern of the study of writing

in what is called literature and of writing generally. "It is a very great part of life," Lawrence reminded us. "It is not superimposition of theory. It is the passionate struggle into conscious being." Locating, then watching, then describing and participating in that struggle as it takes place in the writings of any period could be the most exciting and promising direction of English studies. It points to where language and history truly meet. Literary study can thus be made relevant to life not as a mere supplier of images or visions, but as an activity; it can create capacities through exercise with the language of literature that can then be applied to the language of politics and power, the language of daily life. It's simply terribly hard to do this, however—to make this shift of muscularity of mind and spirit from one allegedly elevated mode of expression, where the muscles can be most conveniently developed, to another mode of expression both more inaccessible and considered so ordinary, so natural as to be beyond inquiry. And yet in this transfer of activity, and in the reciprocations that would follow from it, is the promise of some genuine interplay between different and multiplying cultural traditions.

If English studies is not in command of a field of knowledge it can be in command of a field of energy. I doubt that this function will satisfy the ambitions, especially the rhetorical ones, either of many of the critics of English studies in its present shape or of many of its defenders. The latter think English studies so much more than it is—the bastion of English literature and of the values in it; the former want it to be more than it ever legitimately can be—the bastion of political and moral health. Defenders and critics share the same illusion about the power of literature as a series of finished works, rather than a feeling for the power, still generating in those works, of the retraceable acts of writing, composition, performance. "What is the late November doing / With the disturbance of the spring," asks Eliot of "East Coker," in lines any poet would have been happy to have written, one imagines. Only we are then told "That was a way of putting it—not very satisfactory: / A paraphrastic study in a worn-out poetical fashion, / Leaving one still with the intolerable wrestle / With words and meaning. The poetry does not matter."

English studies cannot be the body of English literature but it can be at one with its spirit: of struggling, of wrestling with words

and meaning. Otherwise English studies may go one of two ways: it can shrink, hopefully in a manner as distinguished and health-giving as that which accompanied the retrenchment of Classics departments; or it can become distended by claims to a relevance merely topical. Alternatively, it can take a positive new step. It can further develop ways of treating *all* writing and *all* reading as analogous acts, as simultaneously unfolding performances, some of which will deaden, some of which will quicken us. This will not sound like a simple prescription to anyone who has given much thought, as I am now trying to do, to the mysteries of performance, even why we think some and not other acts belong under the heading. There will be a need, at the more advanced stages of such study, to ask questions that are essentially anthropological in nature — about ideas of beginnings, about what Frank Kermode calls “the sense of an ending,” about paces and their relation to different concepts of time, about bulk and foreshortening, about “fun” and “excitement” and how such notions change over quite brief spans of an historical period.

Once on its way, this activity can be applied to performances other than those occurring in language — to dance and sports, as much as to film or popular music. English studies must come to grips with different languages of popular culture, with newspapers, political speeches, advertising, conversation, the conduct of the classroom itself. Until proven otherwise, none of these need be treated as if it were necessarily simpler than any other or than literature. The same hard questions for all, as Richard Hoggart would have it. Far from meaning that English studies would thereby slight what it calls literature in order to extend operations, what I propose would give literature real fighting chance to prove, if intensely enough encountered, not its cultural superiority, whatever that might mean, but its superiority as a training ground for all other efforts in the struggle for expression. English studies need only become happily, consciously limited in what it sets out to do with literature instead of, as now, an unhappy pretender. We are a long way from the day hoped for by Emerson when we shall see at last “that the most private is the most public energy.”

Dotson Rader

THE NEW REVOLUTIONARIES

Several months ago, in New York, on a rainy, windy, miserable day, I participated in yet another demonstration against the war in Vietnam. The event was sponsored by the Fifth Avenue Committee To End The War In Vietnam. It drew several thousand protesters, an astonishing number of them of high school age or younger. I saw barely a handful of middle-aged demonstrators, those who used to provide most of the cash and about one-third of the Movement's troops.

At the demonstration I felt again what has become for many of us a correlative to dissent in America: the consciousness that this nation's institutions had already lost the battle at home. Pressing us from the rear was a new generation, more militant than we, ready to use with ease extraconstitutional tactics which were for many radicals still debatable, for some, unthinkable. It was the consciousness that the Johnson-Nixon war, coupled with their administrations' domestic policies, had molded a new generation, a new kind of American teen-ager, more estranged than his college brothers, politically more sophisticated, tougher, more authentically revolutionary than we were at our posturing leftist best.

*I walked alongside the Westchester contingent until the march ended in the park. Hank was nominal leader of the group, I suppose by virtue of the fact that he hoisted the largest placard: **END THE WAR IN VIETNAM! BRING THE WAR HOME!** After the demonstration I took Hank up to Columbia, where I had gone to school for four years. We walked around the campus and I pointed out various landmarks—the Mathematics Building, the sundial, Hamilton Hall, the window of the president's office—where the Columbia Liberation had made its stand. As we strolled I boasted away, feeling heroic in retrospect, like a Bolivian exile escaped to blather in self-exaggeration about the historic days with Che.*

"Why did you give up?" Hank asked, as we crossed Broadway and went inside the West End Bar. "How come you lost the Liberation?"

A good question, yet considering the source, considering the fact that he hadn't been there at the time, I thought he was in no position to criticize us. My age showing, defensively. "There were the cop busts, you know. Awful things. And then a division in our camp. We were outnumbered."

"Why didn't you blow up some buildings, or take more hostages? Why didn't you do something effective?"

"I'm not at Columbia anymore," I said, by way of a dodge.

Hank was sixteen years old. He was dark-haired, handsome in an athletic way. He wore his hair long; it curled at the root of his neck and hung in long ringlets above his eyes. He affected, as did most of the kids, working-class dress, blue jeans, work shirts and construction boots. He had been active on the left for over a year, taking two weeks off from high school earlier in the year to participate in the troubles at San Francisco State. From a wealthy family, jetting to revolution, coming back and believing, as most of us, that the San Francisco confrontation had been a success because it had produced, for the first time, the active support of organized labor, a sympathy strike at the Richmond Oil Refinery.

We talked for a time, he asking me questions about the SDS National Convention that summer, about Progressive Labor. He asked me if I knew Norman Mailer, said he had read the book on the Pentagon protests and thought Mailer was a bourgeois leech using the Movement to make money. He implied as much about me, since I too had written a book on the left. Then we discussed tactics. I told him I believed violence to be premature, even though I admitted the terrorist cadres and the appeals to violence. I believed it counterproductive. We were woefully outnumbered. We would be mowed down like children in any violent encounter with the authorities, witness Chicago.

"What we should do," I said, "is to organize the poor, the young workers, like in France, the armed forces. Win the generation. Christ, when the army's morale is weakened, discipline shoddy, when the soldier wins his freedom and doesn't have to fight wars he hates, then, baby, the ball game's over for the Establishment." So simple.

Then Hank said, and this is when I knew I was dated, losing touch, knew the game had gone far beyond me, "I think we ought to assassinate Mayor Lindsay."

"Why?" I found the idea mad.

"*Why?* Because every goddamn left-lib will ask why, *that's* why! To most Americans it makes no sense."

"It makes none to me." I laughed, not wanting to take him seriously.

"Listen, it'll polarize this country. Scare the pigs pissless . . ."

"It'll produce repression if the government can hang it on us. You have to think of your brothers, its effect on them."

Unperturbed, "Sure. But repression's coming anyway. It's halfway here already. They'll get us all, one by one. Hell, let's bring the fascism out in the open. Let's at least make the country honest. They hate us and the blacks and the young workers, students, so give them the excuse to show their hand . . ." On and on listing the reasons for murder.

"But he's a *decent* man," I said, defending Lindsay, his decency being about the only positive thing I could think of going for him, "Maybe incompetent, but certainly decent."

"Decent? He's the best, the very best the System's produced. Don't you understand? That's *why* we should assassinate him, because he is the best. Killing him, that'll keep the best away . . . if you can justify killing Lindsay, if you can politically justify that, then you can justify killing anyone." It was like something out of a Russian novel. It was unreal to me, what he was saying, the enthusiasm and conviction with which he advanced his argument.

"If you got to thrill kill, why not shoot Nixon or Hoover or Thurmond? Why pick on poor Lindsay? What the hell's he done to deserve that?" I was getting angry. The boy *believed* what he said.

"Because, Dotson," infinite patience in his voice, "those men are not dangerous, not in the long run. They play their roles too well. They're obviously the enemy, fascists . . . but Lindsay, the Lindsays are front men that give people false hope in the System. They think, if Big John's on the job, if the System produces him, then maybe we should give the System time to reform. Well, there ain't any hope and Big John shields the pigs, makes people think revolution isn't needed. Assassinating him, wow! Like that would break the goddamn rules, that would break them for good!"

"You have to make a better case than that." Tired, thinking about a kid I talked through a night with in Boston who was planning to blow up City Hall, had the blueprints and the traffic patterns, knew the security system of the new building. His reasons were the same. Only he was fifteen.

"It's so clear, can't you see? Lindsay's complicit in the System, like he's part of it, man, like why should any politician, even if he isn't a hack, be immune to death when Vietnamese aren't, the poor, the blacks, the draftees aren't? Why should only the System use violence

and not those who oppose it? It's a class thing that kills, Lindsay's bourgeois class . . ."

In the fall, I went with a Columbia friend of mine, Tom Seligson, on a trip across America to interview high school radicals for a book he was writing. The first student we interviewed lived in Scarsdale, New York.

Once a nearly exclusively WASP community, Scarsdale's primarily Jewish population is growing rapidly. The public life of the community is centered in the schools and the country clubs (one for Protestants, one for Catholics, one for Russian Jews, one for German Jews). The boy we talked to was a sophomore in high school. He had a police record, having been arrested five times on various charges growing out of protests in the New York area.

"It's like your life's already a rote, like they expect you to share their values, 'think independent, Benny, think like we do' . . . like living in Scarsdale and making money *means* something.

"You get Bar Mitzvahed, not because you *believe* in the religion, so who believes in it? not my old man, because it's *expected*. You're supposed to go to the college, because it's expected. No one considers that maybe you don't want the college, maybe you want something other than the Big Apple. After the college you're expected to become something big, something important, a cake-eater, making lots of money. Something respectable. So your old man can die happy. *Happy!* Like I should see him happy once in his life, just *once* I should see him come home and look happy, say something, *anything*, happy! He doesn't like this life, or this country. It's all gone bad on him, it means nothing. Just the children, done it all for the children, and now we got to do the same crud for him, live in the same prison. It doesn't fit.

"Now my parents they try to justify the pattern, the high grades, the being good at athletics, dating popular girls, they justify it because it will 'open doors,' doors I don't want to enter. What's so terrible about the South Bronx? He lived there when he was my age. You can be happy in the South Bronx, without the grades. Kill yourself to avoid the South Bronx, for what? Scarsdale?

"I was talking about the pattern all the parents here justify, push on their children. Like when I was in fifth grade, *fifth grade!*, I was worrying about what college would accept me, knowing my parents could never live down the shame if I went to a state school or a second-rate college. Like it was for them I was living, worrying, already all the time worrying. In fifth grade.

"Now we are rejecting things and, funny, we're rejecting them be-

cause of what our parents taught us. We take what they say at face value. Poverty is wrong. The war is wrong. Democracy, that is good. When my father says, this isn't a democracy, the loopholes in the taxes, the Chicago convention, the draft, I say, you're right, father. But he believes it and he doesn't believe it. Not enough to act like he believed it.

"The first thing I rejected was school because it is the most obvious kind of cultural control. Parental control is rejected — going to bed at a certain time, not swearing, wearing certain clothes — but school control is more threatening. You cut classes. You don't do the homework. You try to get away with as much as possible. Because like at fifteen you can't go to the john without a goddamn pass! You can't leave the school building, one stairway for up, one for down, walk on this side of the corridor, not that, don't talk in class, don't walk in the halls, come when a bell rings, go when a bell rings, don't bug your teachers, show respect, accept, accept!

"Cutting is a terrible problem in the Scarsdale schools because the kids don't care about what they're taught. Why get good grades and go to the college to become what you don't want to become? So one day you don't care anymore. No one bothers to explain *why* you should want to spend your life making money, going to the college, being important. So you don't care. Then the drugs start. That lasts awhile. At fourteen I was on grass. You play around. You start to think. You think, why is this country making me into what I hate? You begin to read and study the Movement and you learn that the control in Scarsdale is the same all over the country, in the business, in the army, in the government. The whole country has to get a goddamn pass to piss.

"You want your dignity, you know, your *freedom*. At twelve my mother takes me to dances at the club, I can't even get it up and she says, see M——, a nice girl, her father's the big psychologist, go dance with her, you'll like her, and there's D——, daughter of the successful lawyer, he can help you. Do what? Help me do what? At twelve? Already they see me in Scarsdale down the block with the grandchildren as a liberal Democrat needing a new law firm! It's crazy! God, what do they expect?

"You learn to hate the System and, maybe too, the country. You learn about the war and the poor in this country, about our imperialism and racism, and you think, how will it ever stop if I am a cop-out, if I become a head and drop out. You think, revolution we need, the whole thing busted up and made right. You see, you want to be free in Scarsdale, free to choose.

"If there weren't the Movement, I think without that, without a

whole thing to get yourself together inside, I think I would be catching a fix each night, or trying to get a piece like the end of the world. But the Movement, the Movement gives you a place."

Anne lives in Erie, Pennsylvania. She is seventeen years old, pregnant and a Christian. In that order. She lives with her parents (her father is a laborer at a paper mill) in a small frame house in a section of town that hugs the land between the downtown commercial district and the polluted lake, an area rapidly deteriorating, populated in vague racial patterns by working-class blacks and whites.

When Tom and I came to see her, Anne was sitting out on the front porch on a chain swing next to her mother. We introduced ourselves and then Anne introduced us to her mother. The mother said nothing, stood up and walked inside, slamming the screen door.

We went into Anne's room. It was small, very neat. Posters of Huey Newton and Allen Ginsberg (in an Uncle Sam hat) were over the bed, and a poster in Day-glo red and green spelling LOVE. Tom and I sat on the bed, Anne across from us on a straight-back chair, looking very lovely, delicately erotic, her tiny body comfortably slumped, the pregnant bulge of her stomach in outline beneath her yellow cotton dress. It was Midwestern, that time with Anne, with her flat speech and patience, her muted anger, her dress and her hair—braids, like I haven't seen braids since the Heidi television special—the cleanliness of her house and the sense of rootedness in the community.

We chatted awhile, and then Tom asked what events had radicalized her.

"A lot of things. In school there have been troubles with the Negro boys, fights between whites and Negroes in the playground after school. They're discriminated against. That's how it started, I guess. I mean, started me thinking about politics and things."

"Any specific event, anything personal touch off your thinking?"

"You mean like getting arrested?"

"No, something before you were an activist."

"I'm a Baptist," she admitted, smiling. "I was raised a Baptist. My father teaches Sunday school. I believe in the Lord. The Lord Jesus said to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit the sick. Jesus Christ told us to give our wealth to the poor. I believe that . . . About a year and a half ago, I took one of my girlfriends to church. We were having an 'Andrew Week' . . ."

"What's that?" Tom asked. I had never heard of it either.

". . . Andrew brought his friends to the Lord to hear the Gospel. So, during that week, we act like Andrew. We bring our friends to

church. I brought B——, who is a Negro. She went to my Sunday school class with me and after we went to service together. No one said anything, but the church members were very cold. The next Sunday I went to her church. All Negro. Everyone was very nice to me. A few weeks later the pastor of my church said he wanted to fellowship with me."

"*Fellowship?*" I asked. It sounded indecent.

Anne laughed. "Yeah. That means to counsel someone. My pastor said I shouldn't bring B—— to church anymore. God had divided the races, he said, and he quoted a scripture verse where God warned Israel about mingling with the People of the Land. She will be happier with people of her own kind, he said."

"How did you feel about that?"

"I thought it was cruel. And typical. It was hypocritical. It wasn't Christian. I think America is like that. America is hypocritical. We don't do what we say. In the construction unions in Erie the Negroes can't get jobs. They get worse grades in school, even if they do the same work as the whites. The coaches don't like to use them on the teams, especially football, because the white parents object. The high schools are very bad, very dull. None of the students like them. What good is it, high school? If you are a boy you end up a laborer doing awful work. If you are a girl you get married and live like my mother. You get old. Or if you are a boy maybe you have to go to war."

"What do you think ought to be done?"

"We're trying to start an SDS chapter in our school. We want to have a student strike to force the school to give power to the students. We want to handle our own discipline. We want to run the school paper, not have it be just a rag for the principal to brainwash with. We want to have outside speakers from the Movement come in and talk. We want to be able to judge textbooks and teachers. We want to be able to discuss important things in class, like drugs and real politics and black history and capitalism as it really is."

"Is there much of a drug problem in Erie?"

"Did you see the hippies in the park? No? Well, there are always hippies in the park downtown. Lots of kids use grass but not too many use hard drugs. A couple years ago more kids thought getting wrecked was the most beautiful thing, but now, I guess now kids are into politics more. Pot doesn't seem such a wild thing. We get high just learning what to do, just rapping."

"Is there much sexual activity in the high schools, among the radical students," I asked, and then felt embarrassed for her. I had forgotten her pregnancy.

"How do you mean? People always make love."

"When I was your age we used to tear around in cars and screw in the back seat. Sex was the most important thing. How important is sex here?"

"Oh," she said, and thought a moment. "The hippies play a lot, even in the park. But the hippies, the hippies aren't really part of our scene. Sex is there all right. Look at me," she laughed, "but I don't think it's taken too seriously. Like we don't make the revolution in bed."

I changed the subject. "Where do you think America is going?"

"To hell."

"What can you do about it?"

"Outside of praying?" she asked, facetiously. "We can bring the revolution. I can't do much right today, but when I am through with school I'm going somewhere, to some big city, and work as an organizer for SDS or someone. I mean, we are going to have a revolution so we have to organize for it, get guns, things like that."

"You believe in violence?" I asked the obvious, but I wanted to make sure again. Nearly every high school student I talked with mentioned revolution as the only alternative, completely disregarding a reformist approach. And that was new, the acceptance of the necessity and morality of revolution. Less than a year ago most radicals still spoke of reformist structural change. Now, at least among the youngest elements of the Movement, revolution was the goal.

"No," Anne said, hedging, "but I believe in self-defense. America'll be an armed camp in five years. The army has those concentration camps for dissenters. Nixon is already sending leaders to jail on drug charges and thing like that. The kids will have to get arms and probably will have to make our own communities, like hippie communes, in the country, armed communities. It will be guerrilla war in a few years."

"Where will you be then?"

"On the side of the guerrillas."

"There's a journalistic cliché," I said, "that the high school kids don't trust anyone over thirty. Is that true?" I was three years away from banishment.

"I suppose. The old people have sold out. Nothing but wars with them. And racism. What have they done for you to trust them?"

"You wouldn't want to kill them, would you?"

"Some of them. There should be war trials, like in Germany after the war, for the President and Johnson and the others. The generals and the businessmen. They should be shot."

"But what about your Christianity?"

"The early Christians went underground. They built secret communities. They were young. And in a couple of years they took over Rome. America is as evil as Rome. Thirty-eight thousand boys are dead. Someone sent them there. Someone killed them by sending them. Those responsible should die. That is Christian, that is just."

"Isn't there a way to avoid it? Tom asked, a little appalled at her militancy. "You seem so confident."

"Maybe there is. I don't want it avoided. The Bible says that fathers and sons, and mothers and daughters, will fight each other. That'll happen. And there'll be class war. But we'll win." She touched her stomach, "We're the future, you know."

I left Anne and went walking down to Lake Erie while Tom did the interview once more, this time taping it. I walked for several blocks along the lake thinking about Anne and about the mildness of her way and about her paranoia — "concentration camps." Paranoia riddled the Movement, being especially evident among the college radicals, the professionals and the blacks who had, it seemed, good cause for their feelings of threat. Twenty Panthers murdered by police this year, thousands of radicals arrested on various charges, some inducted into the armed forces for opposing the draft. Beatings. Expulsions. Fear.

However, it was surprising to find that an identical paranoia obtained among high school students whose contacts with the authorities were less direct. Perhaps the reason for this is that the new generation of teen-agers is not as affected by being raised on eight hours of television a day as we have been led to believe, certainly not in the way we believed. It is clear that their primary sources of *credible* information comes not from the Cronk on the tube but from underground sources: free press publications (there are nearly one thousand high school radical newspapers), radical books and a kind of oral testament circulated by kids throughout the country, tales of oppression and defeat.

Last year 60 percent of American high schools suffered disorders which can be defined as political in nature. Most of the students involved were blacks and middle-class whites. Emphatically, somewhere down the line, American pedagogical programing has massively broken down — the grim chute — high school to college to corporate job. The value system has been eroded (a professor at Columbia, bemoaning the contradictions and patent inconsistency of much of the SDS rhetoric, said, "There is something palpably wrong, something terribly irrelevant about the liberal dogmas if the young see radical nonsense as a rational alternative to the liberal tradition. Something is wrong with liberalism

if they turn to that,") and what has replaced it is a fanatically nonacquisitive communalism, touched with anarchy, which has contempt (an attitude the young are good at) for the rat race mentality of their parents. The high school young I met believe that very little in nature is expendable, certainly not the lives of the innocent. They have little consciousness of territorial rights, ownership. Economically and socially they are noncompetitive and, curiously, culturally intolerant.

I am reminded of a high school commune in an apartment in the eighties in Manhattan, one of a score of communes in the New York environs, where for nearly a year twenty-odd high school drop-outs have lived communally. When you ask them what they'll be doing in a few years, deprived of degrees and marketable skills, they answer that there will be many more communes, thousands of them, where they can live and play. And for those who have come to the Movement from an apolitical, subcultural route, their opposition to the System is based, not so much on the war and the racism, but on a hatred of capitalism. Capitalism, they suggest, can never tolerate widespread nonconformity. It requires a working class—youth—programed by its schools to do its work, and to believe that that work is meaningful. In the long run they believe that unless the government is overthrown, their communes, and their life style along with them, will be crushed.

One of the most surprising elements, to me, in the character of the high school radicals is the nature of their sexuality. When I was in high school, nearly a decade ago, we considered ourselves rebels in the tradition of James Dean and Brando, and our rebellion took much of its expression in our music (rock 'n' roll—Jerry Lee Lewis, The Big Bopper, the Everly Brothers, etc.) and subsequently in our strutting, unfurled promiscuity. One established his manhood by balling as many chicks as possible in the shortest amount of time with the maximum level of public (peer group) notice. The big parental worry was the promiscuity of the young. Parents saw our rock 'n' roll and our souped-up cars as threatening because they *were* sexual. Our rebellion was primarily sexual in character.

The present high school radicals don't seem to posit their manhood (adulthood) primarily through sex. I think one reason may be the Pill, another that, partly because of the Pill, sex comes earlier by several years than it did for us and another that politics are now the central avenues of rebellion. If you are a youth you prove your manhood by standing up to the pigs, not by numbering your fornications on the locker room walls. Significantly, the girls share this change in attitude toward sex (that is, sex has become again a function, a private

one, rather than a tribal rite) and express that change in their independence, their lack of moral remorse over sexual contacts and their demand for an end to male chauvinism. But what produces this transformation in the appreciation of the uses of sex is the creation, for the first time, of a viable, alternative life style for the young. That life style—represented at its best by the communes, the informal, colorful dress, the communalistic manners, the Movement—provides political, overtly nonsexual channels for adolescent resistance to adult authority and values, giving them a shared body of belief (leftist) and history which enables them to free themselves from the straight life. One does not have to go his old man's way. There is another way, and that, with all its many sexual, social, generational nuances, is carried in the word revolution. Revolution, the alternative life style, will, I think, prevent assimilation in five or ten years of the radical teen-agers into the straight community. They cannot be bought anymore.

I have often wondered why it is that the image of the high school radicals is so inaccurate—most American adults think of them as being identified with the hippies, drugs, perverse sex practices, rock. The reason, I suspect, is that most of the young men who write about the scene (a boring word), people like Mike Jahn, Richard Goldstein, James Kunen, Richard Lorber, are my age, writers who came out of the worlds of rock criticism and radical *college* politics but who are rapidly losing touch with the kids. So you try to make them into what you were at their age, you want them to be as excited about Elvis and the return of Jerry Lee Lewis, your past, excited about drugs and sex as you were once, and in the process of gilding the young kids with your nostalgia you unconsciously miss their jadedness, their privateness and, with a face rarely shown to anyone outside their community, their gentleness.

Pigcity. Chicago. Richard Daley's empire. Southside, in the black ghetto, the territory with the highest crime rate and the most corrupt police, the place where Daley's party henchmen work hand-in-glove with the Brotherhood to rob through numbers and junk; there, in a tenement near the Dan Ryan Expressway, I visited a black girl named Thelma, who had spent the summer working in a free school, run by the Black Panthers, which educated grammar school youngsters in black pride and socialism. Thelma is sixteen years old and her personal history is, in a way, the history of her race in America. Deprivation. At thirteen Thelma was raped in a vacant lot one block from her home. She has a long history of political activism, participation in two Southside racial disor-

ders, in the Grant Park disturbances, in a number of sit-ins and various other protests.

I arrived at Thelma's home in the early evening, coming directly from the bus depot. She lives with her mother in a one-bedroom apartment with two small brothers and a sister. When I came in, Thelma was sitting on the floor drinking a can of beer and watching television while her brothers and sister played on the linoleum floor, building towers out of cans and knocking them to the ground. Thelma was dressed in blue jeans, sandals and a white T-shirt (a radical's uniform). She wore her hair naturally, combed in a huge moon-shaped crown.

We spoke for awhile, getting acquainted. Then Thelma asked to show me the district.

We went down the stairs, the landings piled with uncollected garbage, dark, smelling of urine and spilled booze and what else? Something fetid and decaying. "The landlord, the city don't clean nothing. We has a block party to clean things up nice, brought all the shit out to the street and the Mayor Pig don't collect nothing. Sat there stinking for weeks."

We walked for several blocks past abandoned buildings, boarded-up windows, vacant lots piled with heaps of bricks and cement and garbage, resembling haystacks on the land, ghetto sights and smells, Cleveland, New York, Detroit.

It was dark, very dark, most of the street lamps shot out by the kids; people were sitting outside on the stoops making conversation and, on one street, a group of black boys played stickball, oblivious to the traffic. Thelma said that the empty lots and the cellars were full of rats, that derelicts were often bitten when they fell asleep inside. We passed a public school. Thelma stopped and examined the building. POWER TO THE PEOPLE and POWER TO THE PANTHERS was scrawled in red paint on the stoop. "Watch, man," she said, and picked up half a brick and hurled it through the window. I picked up another and followed suit.

We went back. It was hot. Inside. Thelma made me a tuna fish sandwich and we talked about my experiences on the left. Then we went into the bedroom and climbed through the window and sat together on the fire escape. One of her little brothers tagged after us and climbed over the sill and sat himself beside me. And there I was, white, middle-class, a writer from New York slumming, feeling guilty and, what was worse, feeling out-of-place. Perhaps that is where our inexhaustible racism lies, in the discomfort and the nagging suspicion that we are out-of-place among the poor blacks, that their experience is somehow

terribly special, that to be black is to be *different* essentially, in the most human terms, from the whites. We unconsciously feel that, and we justify our feelings by appeals to theories of conditioning, of the unique nature of their history. But I think sometimes that maybe our sense of difference — and it is that difference in life patterns and conditions which we use to justify their rebellion against us in our minds — is the clit stump of our racism.

The fire escape overlooked the railroad tracks. A train came by and, when it passed by the building, so close you could reach out and drop cement blocks on its roof, Thelma shouted, "Sit back, boy!" at her little brother, as bottles, cans, pieces of concrete came thudding on the train from the windows above. Thelma laughed. "Wait until tonight," she said. "Them bastards pays us back. All night whistles toot."

"What are you doing in the fall?" School was to open soon. "Are you going back to school?"

Thelma glanced at me, raising her eyebrows. "School? Brother, I was expelled from that school by the sisters. Parochial school. You understand, Catholic? And them bitches throws me out. They hate niggers."

"Why'd they throw you out?"

"Why you think, huh? They don't have to *be* no why. Cause I was passing out leaflets. Some of the brothers and the sisters was having meetings for high school students. That what the leaflets was about. Twice them sisters caught me. Get you black ass out of our school, they say."

"Really?" It sounded dubious to me, the "black ass" line.

Thelma glanced over at me, shaking her head. "That what they *means!*"

I asked her what she thought of America. Her answer wasn't surprising.

"I think it *eats*, that what I thinks. They kills the brothers, you *know* that! I mean like Pig Daley, his pigs go in guns firing into the headquarters. They kills us on the street, like they kills Hutton. Arrests us, and beats us. Man, they does it to *you*. The SDS cats, they raid them brothers *all* the time."

"How did you become a radical?" The standard questions.

"Ain't it plain? Like I grew up one, just breathing this shit, just walking them streets, just being *black*, baby, just being lowdown and black."

"What's in the future, what do you see ahead?"

She thought a moment, and then she said quietly, her words angry but her voice quiet, the Southern dialect softening the bitterness in tone. "I think we's in for more killing, like a revolution! Unless the Man ups

and decides he going to give us our nation. No more this being a nigger colony in the Mother Country for the Man. No more. We wants our own nation and we fight 'til we gets it. Ain't going to have my little brother, no more black babies, grows up to live in this *filth*. This is *filth*, man, *pig* filth! What would you do, white boy, what would you do? You'd take up a gun, sure you would, you'd take up a gun if you was living like this shit. Yes, sir, yes you would." Shaking her head, angry, frustrated, beyond herself, "I tells you something," she said, grabbing my wrist, staring at me, "the brothers and the sisters is going to get themselves guns. Already got some. But we ain't going for no war. We just use them in self-defense. Defending ourselves from the *pohlice*. The *pigs*. Ain't going to shoot like cowboys around this town, those pigs, or they's going to get shot back."

"Do you think very many other blacks in high school, do you think they agree with you?"

"Most. Most do. Just you look around you, just you look around at where the Man makes us live. Stupid question, man, dumb, stupid question."

I stayed that night at Thelma's. I never saw her mother. As she had predicted all night long the trains passed by beneath the windows, the whistles blaring, sleep impossible.

* * *

I have spoken with many other high school radicals, many of them not as articulate nor as revolutionary as Hank or Anne or Thelma. Among the youths I have spent time with are four working-class white boys in Erie, whom I interviewed at a public pool. They admitted to a bias against, or at least a suspicion of, the blacks, but, more significantly, they shared with the blacks a terror of the war in Vietnam and a sense of futility over the future of their lives. Three of the boys planned on quitting public school when they reached seventeen years of age, the following year. I asked them what they would do then. They answered that they would join one of the armed services since it was a choice between that and going to work in a factory, neither of which they wanted, but they had no other choice, their lives reduced to those options. It seems obvious to me that in time, unless the war is ended quickly and the division between competing values of the generations is bridged — a conflict in cultures of enormous, violent potential — unless the shape of things gives way before the young, allows them greater access to power and, therefore, to meaning, unless something radical is done to end poverty and injustice consistent with three decades of declared and unenforced public policy, then in time, a majority of the young,

certainly the best of them, the most thoughtful and gifted, the sensitive and public spirited elements of the generation will join Thelma and Hank and Anne on the ramparts. Never to come back. For there is more that unites the generation than divides it, it is as simple as that. Class and racial divisions won't anymore keep the young and radical divided and therefore in check. That has passed, too.

The radical movement in the high schools has grown with incredible speed. Most persons active in radical circles agree that the battlefield has moved from the colleges to the high schools, factories and army camps. A large minority of the new teen-age generation is unassimilatable into American (straight) culture as it is presently constituted. They cannot be bought. They've crossed over and they won't return.

I asked Thelma where she thought she would be in five years.

"Dead," she replied.

"You don't think you might sell-out, change, maybe reform will come and things will be made right?"

"Goddamn, where you been? It don't make no difference. I ain't got *nothing* to lose. A revolution could only help me. What could it take from me the Man ain't already took? My life? That belong to the brothers and the sisters, to my people."

"But what if you had something to lose?"

"It still don't make no difference. We wants justice. You understand? Justice. We don't care what they *will* do, we want the Man to pay for what he *done*. Three hundred years of bad times got to be paid for, baby, somebody got to pay. That somebody is the honkey Man, that who that somebody is. Yes, sir, that who he is."

Leslie Fiedler

THE MALE NOVEL

George Lippard, the author of *The Quaker City*, or *The Monks of Monk Hall* is a little known figure in the history of American literature. For many years, as a matter of fact, his very existence was kept a secret in the official histories of the novel in the United States, as if he represented a shameful episode in a past we were all doing our best to forget. In recent years, however, scholarly candor has triumphed over patriotic shame; and beginning with Alexander Cowie in *The Rise of the American Novel* (1948), historians of our fiction have been making an effort to come to terms with Lippard and his "dirty" book.

It is, after all, impossible to ignore forever a writer who produced one of the all-time best sellers, a book which he himself boasted "has been more attacked, and more read, than any work of American fiction ever published"; and which, in fact, sold 60,000 copies in 1844, the year of publication, and was still being bought at the rate of 30,000 a year in 1854, the year of Lippard's death. Not only in America, but in England and on the Continent, Lippard was read by those who pretended to be scandalized as well as by those who didn't even realize that they ought to be shocked. In Germany the "most immoral work of the age" seems to have been a special favorite; and, ironically, during the period when *The Quaker City* had disappeared from our own literary histories, it continued to be listed in German ones as the work of Friederich Gerstäcker under the title *Die Quakerstadt und ihre Geheimnisse*.

Lippard is an immensely attractive figure, a revolutionary dandy who, in the short thirty-two years of his life, managed to dazzle and provoke the Philadelphia society in which he moved, romantically wrapped in a Byronic cape and always armed against paid assassins

whom he imagined everywhere. Brought up to be a minister, he found no church liberal enough to suit his beliefs, and became a kind of lay apostle preaching the doctrine of socialism. All forms and conventions of the community in which he lived seemed to him intolerable; and he married his wife, for instance, simply by taking her hand as they stood together on a high rock overlooking his native city.

He was not only an immensely prolific novelist, author of innumerable books, *The Legends of the American Revolution*, *Blanche of Brandywine*, *The Mysteries of Florence*, *The Memoirs of a Preacher*, *The Empire City*, *The Bank Director's Son*, *The Entranced*, *New York: Its Upper Ten*, etc., etc.; he was a lecturer as well and fancied himself a natural political leader. He founded, in fact, a radical organization called The Brotherhood of Union (later renamed The Brotherhood of America), of which he appointed himself the "Supreme Washington"; and he issued revolutionary manifestos insisting, "When Labor has tried all other means in vain— . . . then we advise Labor to go to War . . . War with the Rifle Sword and Knife!" Moreover, he considered his fiction another weapon to be used in the struggle, "LITERATURE merely considered as an ART is a despicable thing . . . A literature which does not work practically, for the advancement of social reform . . . is just good for nothing at all." And this, surely, is one clue to Lippard's long eclipse.

Had he been just a "dirty" writer, he might have survived change of fashion and critical neglect, survived as an underground classic; and had he been a properly pious Socialist, his memory might well have been preserved by Marxist critics in search of literary ancestors. To be a "dirty" socialist writer, however, is to lose on all counts. Yet Lippard does not stand alone in his allegiance to sensation and smut, on the one hand, and to social reform, on the other. Indeed, to come to terms with him we must come to terms with a whole school of fiction which the habit of contempt and the limitations of our own hopelessly elitist views of art have made it difficult for us to understand. Outside the context of that stream of literature, Lippard can only seem an eccentric, a freak, rather than one of the group of literary pioneers trying to create a true popular literature.

It is tempting to see Lippard in an American setting, which is to say, one too parochial really to explain him; and, as a matter of fact, he himself encourages us to do so. His most famous novel is

dedicated to Charles Brockden Brown, to whom he also wrote a moving tribute in a contemporary magazine; and his name, otherwise excluded from respectable notice, was associated in literary history with Edgar Allen Poe, whom he befriended. What is easier, then, and superficially more satisfactory than to associate him with these two exponents of the American Gothic, both of whom had connections of one kind or another with Lippard's native Philadelphia.

Lippard is, however, very different from either of his two fellow countrymen, not only in his resolve to address a mass audience in the slapdash style and open form he felt suitable for that end rather than to woo an elite one—but in theme and setting as well. It is the city which concerns him, the contemporary American city, New York and Philadelphia in particular; and he therefore rejects equally the brand of exoticism that moved Poe to set many of his dream-fugues against a half imaginary European background, and that which impelled Brockden Brown (as well as Poe in his single novel) to evoke the shadowy terror of the American wilderness.

In order to find writers whom he really resembles, one has to look beyond rather than before him on the American scene—to Jack London, Theodore Dreiser and Norman Mailer, who in *An American Dream* seems closer to what Lippard was doing in *The Quaker City* than anything written between, and this is, perhaps, because it was written serially and under pressure for a popular magazine. If only it had been illustrated as well! Like Lippard, all of these later writers combine a taste for the sentimental and sensational with an ideological commitment to socialism. Dreiser, moreover, shares with him an appalled fascination with the city and its depraved masters, though he rather lacks what Lippard, London and Mailer possess in an eminent degree—a kind of natural access to the erotic dreams and paranoid fantasies of the male members of the working class.

Poe, on the other hand, touches the imagination of childhood, appealing to what remains most childlike in us; and thus creating fantasies appropriate to the impotence of that state, as opposed to those arising out of the deprivations of the poor. It is perhaps because the child tends to dream of withdrawing from the world which excludes him, triumphing over it in proud loneliness rather than of making it in that world like the workingman, that Poe—despite having helped invent so basic a pop form as the detective story—has become a founding father of avant-garde literature intended for an

elite audience. The descendants of Poe are French dandies, not American radicals—Baudelaire and Mallarmé rather than London and Dreiser and Mailer.

It is finally, however, not even Lippard's American successors, much less his predecessors, who provide the essential clue to what he is after, but certain of his contemporaries in England and Europe: in particular, the popular German novelist, Friederich Gerstäcker (1816-1872), the English publisher, journalist and writer of fiction, W. M. Reynolds (1814-1879), and, especially, that super best seller in a time of best sellers, the French novelist Eugène Sue (1804-1857). All three of these novelists along with Lippard himself, were responding to the special challenges of their period, as were, in their own way, their more respectable contemporaries like Dickens and Balzac; and like them, aiming at commercial success before critical acclaim.

In the case of Gerstäcker, Reynolds, Sue and Lippard, however, there is a tendency to abandon utterly traditional standards of "art"; while Dickens and Balzac were somehow having it both ways—triumphing in the market place, while preparing a place for themselves in the libraries and classrooms of the future. The radical popular writers, however, accommodated to the new possibilities and new audiences of their time and won in the process the disfavor of the squeamish and genteel generations that immediately succeeded them. And they did so in a fashion which begins to seem to us now, in another antigenteel time, at a second stage of the Pop Revolution, immensely suggestive and admirable.

As in our era, so in the time of Lippard it was new technology which determined the new aesthetics; and, indeed, this is the essential nature of Pop Art. Certain technological advances had, in any event, made possible the printing of books at a price much lower than anybody had hitherto envisaged: the new rotary steam press; a new method of making paper, first introduced into England by John Gamble in 1801, but resisted by the industry until around 1820; the perfection of the stereotype, making possible quick reprintings; and, finally, the commercial development of lithography by the German emigré, Rudolph Ackermann, who also persuaded the great caricaturists of the era to become illustrators. Those inventions were intended chiefly to facilitate the publication of popular newspapers, but they served also to bring about a marriage of journalism and fiction, creating that odd hybrid, the newspaper serial. And, indeed,

the cheap novel, the "penny-dreadful," is the newspaper novel: stereotyped on newsprint, copiously illustrated and appearing in weekly or monthly penny installments—the author never more than a chapter or two ahead of his readers.

Technology, however, could only make possible mass-production of fiction; mass-distribution depended ultimately on the creation of a mass audience, and this was the work not of engineers but missionaries. The spread of literacy in the time of Lippard was carried on chiefly in institutions established by the Evangelical churches and various philanthropic organizations dedicated to the "cultural enrichment" of the laborer: Charity Schools, Sunday Schools, Mechanics Institutes. Once readers were present in large numbers and the price of books had been brought within their reach, the ingenuity of the businessman (particularly in England) soon created new ways of getting books into more and more hands.

In the age of Lippard and Reynolds and Sue this meant the circulating library, as it had since the eighteenth century, and especially the railway station bookstall, which was new. The stagecoach had proved a notably inappropriate mode of conveyance for reading, combining a maximum of disruptive motion with a minimum of light; but the railway carriage provided lighting conditions which made it quite possible to read, as well as a kind of comfort so conducive to ennui as to make *not* reading almost impossible. The period, therefore, saw the emergence of a new view of reading, still alive in our time—reading as the form of relaxation or escape appropriate to the trip into the country, or the start of a holiday, reading as a happy state between waking and sleeping.

The use of movies and stereo music on transcontinental and transoceanic air flights perhaps marks the beginning of the end of this period, but bookstands remain to this very moment a conspicuous adornment of all depots and airports. And the same sort of people still line up before them, as departure time approaches, grabbing a handful of books which must be cheap enough to be thrown away or left behind, and which must guarantee somehow total irresponsibility. Such readers, to be sure, are now—as they were then—not typically workingmen at all, but middle-class people, even students, slummings as it were, temporarily taking a holiday from the "serious literature" on their library shelves at home. Yet a large part of the

readership of Sue and Reynolds and Lippard must have been drawn from this class—out of which, indeed, came those critics who in middle age disavowed what in their youth they had enjoyed, though even then (they were to claim at least) only as an unworthy indulgence, a minor vice.

It was not, however, primarily to or for such readers, that Lippard and his colleagues wrote. He may have managed to earn between three and four thousand dollars a year with their help, but his books (like Sue's or Reynolds's) do not represent a purely commercial response to opportunities opened up by advances in technology and new developments in bookselling; they are also, in a deeper sense, "popular," which is to say, aimed at educating the working-class elements of their audience to live better lives and even to make for themselves a better world. Lippard lived through difficult times as a youth, but is not himself of working-class origin, any more than were Sue and Reynolds and Gerstacker; yet he was a convinced socialist, and, like his contemporaries, got into trouble because of his political activism. His revolutionary doctrine was pre-Communist Manifesto socialism: not the "scientific" theory developed, with appropriate statistics and "laws," by Marx and his followers, but the sort of utopian, idealistic, sentimental dream expressed, with appropriate rhetoric and poetry, by Fourier and others, only to be mocked and belittled by Marx.

Whatever the lack in precision and sophistication of its social doctrine, the 1840's was a period in which for the first time it had become possible to speak of a "working class" rather than of "the lower orders" or "the poor"; and in which it was therefore possible to imagine a kind of literature appropriate to a group thus redefined. Condescension had not disappeared entirely with the invention of a new nomenclature (any more than it disappears entirely among us now that we have learned to say "Black" rather than "darky" or "colored man" or "Negro"), since men like Sue and Reynolds were quite remote from their readers in social origin. Yet, unlike the kind of literature written at "the lower orders" and "the poor," fiction for the "working class" mostly eschewed advice to its audience about knowing their places and accepting their lot. Rather it held out to them the possibility of imagining (perhaps someday creating) a world in which they would fare better; or at least one in which the corruption of their masters would be exposed to scorn.

Quite obviously, the "penny-dreadful" did not operate to change the visible world, as did, for instance, the revolutionary pamphlets and books of Marx and Engels. Instead it changed hearts and minds, altered both the self-consciousness of the workers and the consciousness of them among the bourgeoisie. Thinking of something like this, George Bernard Shaw was once moved to remark that Dickens' *Little Dorrit* was a more revolutionary book than Marx's *Das Kapital*. And surely, even more directly and crudely than Dickens, Sue and Reynolds and Lippard used their kind of fiction to demythologize the upper classes and to mythologize the lower ones, to expose and debunk aristocratic life and to sentimentalize and glorify the life of the humble.

Precisely because it was addressed not to the reason but the sensibilities of its readers, this fiction could not afford to be merely didactic or tendentious. It aimed above all at telling stories of breathless suspense, creating vivid images of horror and lust, thus rousing passion and releasing it, over and over in a series of orgasmic explosions. The development of this sort of fiction is not linear in the mode of conventional plotting; it is up and down, from peak to valley, tumescence to detumescence and back.

"Excitement" rather than "instruction and delight" is the end sought by the writers of the Popular Literature of the 1840's; and in quest of it, they exploited, with the virtuosity of old pros, two basic human responses: to sex and aggression. Theirs was, that is to say, a kind of fiction thoroughly sadomasochistic and at least demi-pornographic, though always in terms more political than domestic, more public than private. The brothel and the gallows were their preferred scene—areas where commerce and sex, law and violence oddly consorted. And this concern with public issues constitutes a bid for respectability though of a special sort.

Such pious and sadomasochistic subpornography must, therefore, be seen as occupying an unsuspected middle ground between that preempted by the novels intended for the "proper Victorians" and that exploited by those writers whom Stephen Marcus has called the "other Victorians." Unlike the pure Porn provided by the latter, political demi-porn contains no crudely explicit language, no forbidden words, no actual descriptions of the sexual encounter, only a constant teasing of the imagination, a constant invitation to finish for one's self scenes which fade out in a swoon and discreet silence.

We are often invited into ladies' beds or permitted to peep into their boudoirs, but never permitted to remain for the penetration of their lovely flesh.

And though text and illustration exploit female nudity to feed the erotic fantasies so essential to popular fiction, such nakedness extends only to the navel. There is typically—usually in the course of a lingering description of a disrobing as a prelude to seduction or rape—considerable exposure of what such writers like to call “snowy globes,” though of nothing below the waist. There is no more breast-centered concern with the female form in art, with the possible exception of the Fountains of Rome and the center fold-out of *Playboy*.

It should be clear that the literature of the 1840's is a specific sub-genre of popular literature—not merely produced by men only but intended for an exclusively male audience. It was, therefore, doomed to an at least temporary eclipse, not only by the more ambitious literature contemporary with it, the work of, say, Balzac and Dickens—but also by the Pop literature which immediately succeeded it: those genteel best sellers of the 1870's (*The Lamp-Lighter*, parodied by Joyce in the Gertie MacDowell episode of *Ulysses* is an example) which represented an attempt to come to terms with the reemergence of a bourgeois female audience—first appealed to by Richardson—as the controllers of the literary market place.

In any case, it is the temporary dissolution of a politically-minded male audience with a taste for subpornography, in favor of the domestically oriented female audience with a taste for pure sentimentality which explains the loss of approval suffered by Lippard's kind of fiction. And when that male audience reasserted itself at the very end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of ours, it had grown somehow less political, was willing at any rate to satisfy itself with the exotic adventure story, the detective novel and the Western—each projecting in its way a nostalgic dream of innocence rather than fantasies of exposure and revolution and sex.

The later pop forms for men only tend, in fact, to be tales of men only; but in the 1840's no male best seller was without its female victims, raped or seduced, by the evil rich, rescued and redeemed by the worthy poor—or more usually, by renegade aristocratic champions of the poor. Descriptions of the female form were as essential to this genre as to the sentimental literature read by the wives, moth-

ers and sisters of its fans. Yet how different those descriptions, in direct response to the differences of the fantasies which fed them, and were in turn fed by them.

Here, for instance, are two contrasting passages, the first from the *Family Herald* of 1850, the second from Reynolds' *Wagner: the Were-Wolf*. They are quoted side by side in a study by Margaret Dalziel called *Popular Fiction 100 Years Ago*, presumably to illustrate Reynolds' superior skill and candor as compared to other contemporary mass entertainers; but they illustrate rather the diversity of the images of woman demanded, on the one hand, by the female popular audience and, on the other, by the male.

Alice was one of those tall, aristocratic-looking creatures, who notwithstanding a certain slimness, realise, perhaps, the highest ideal of female beauty. Her figure was of the lordly Norman type, and perfect in its proportions; while every movement was graceful, yet dignified. Her face was of that almost divine beauty we see in the Beatrice Cenci of Guido. The same dazzling complexion, the same blue eyes, the same golden hair. . . . Her countenance, always lovely, was now transcendently beautiful, for it glowed with enthusiasm.

She was attired in deep black; her luxuriant raven hair, no longer depending in shining curls, was gathered up in massy bands at the sides, and in a knot behind, whence hung a rich veil that *meandered over her body's splendidly symmetrical length of limb in such a manner as to aid her attire in shaping rather than hiding the contours of that matchless form*. The voluptuous development of her bust was shrouded, not concealed, by the stomacher of black velvet which she wore, and which set off in strong relief the dazzling whiteness of her neck.

And now Lippard in a similar vein:

Her head deep sunken in a downy pillow, a beautiful woman, lay wrapt in slumber. By the manner in which the silken folds of the coverlid were disposed, you might see that her form was full, large and voluptuous. Thick masses of jet-black hair fell, glossy and luxuriant, over her round neck and along her uncovered bosom, which swelling with the full ripeness of womanhood, rose gently in the light . . . And over that full bosom, which rose and fell with the gentle impulse of slumber, over that womanly bosom, which should have been the home of pure thoughts and wifely affections, was laid a small and swarthy hand, whose fingers, heavy with rings, pressed against the ivory skin, all streaked with veins of delicate azure, and clung twiningly among the dark tresses that hung drooping over the breast, as its globes rose heaving into view, like worlds of purity and womanhood.

Even from so scant a sampling it should be clear that the popular male novel of the 1840's is distinguished not only by a common subject matter and a shared stock of imagery, but also by a special style, which, invented in French, manages to survive in German, as well as in both British and American English. That style tends toward the breathless, the ecstatic, the rhapsodic, as is appropriate to a kind of prose in which the cadences of emotion are always threatening to break through the limits of syntax. And in some of the writers of the school, conventional marks of punctuation give way to dashes or dots to indicate the replacement of logic by passion, as in Reynolds, for instance.

Even while he reflected upon other things—amidst the perils which enveloped his career, and the reminiscences of the dread deeds of which he had been guilty—amongst the reasons which he had assembled together to convince himself that the hideous countenances at the gate did not exist in reality—there was one idea—unmixed—definite—standing boldly out from the rest in his imagination—that *he might be left to die of starvation!*

Sometimes the full stop is replaced not by the dash but by the exclamation points, or even double exclamation points, while paragraphs shrink to the single exclamatory sentence. Again as in Reynolds:

A week contains a hundred and sixty-eight hours.
And he worked a hundred and nineteen hours each week!
And earned eight shillings!!
A decimal more than three farthings an hour!!!

The intent is clear, in any case: to write "badly" at all costs, which is to say, to choose an air of slapdash carelessness over any pretense at polish; to prefer clichés to well-turned phrases; and to let grammar take care of itself. Squeamish critics, both then and now, have tended to be put off by this affectation of banality and sub-literacy, which is, in fact, somehow functional and effective. I myself, writing about Lippard earlier, have fallen into that trap—betraying my own genuine fondness for his mad book by condescension, and thus revealing the "double standard" toward High and Pop art which I find difficult to transcend. In *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960), where along with many observations which seem to me valid still, I felt obliged to talk about "a slapdash literary level considerably below that of his predecessor . . ." "shame-

fully masturbating dreams" etc. But throughout that study, it seems to me now, I tried to justify my quite valid determination to deal with "pop books" as well as "classics" with snide or ironical asides. It is one of the few things I would now change if I could without falsifying my earlier version. And yet reading in other critics such typical ploys as, "One cannot condemn Elvis Presley for not being like Gigli. On the other hand it is not enough . . ." or "One can study pornography by its own standards, but one has always to make it clear . . ." I know the limitations of such a double view, shudder to think how strongly and for how long it affected my own criticism.

In both realms of art, if in fact they are two, form follows function as it properly should. The structure of the subpornographic novel, for instance, is as unorthodox as its sentences, since—like many pop genres, eg., the daytime radio and T.V. serial—it tends to be all middle, with no real beginning or conclusion. The books of Lippard and Sue and Reynolds are, in essence, endless books. *The Quaker City*, though itself a fairly thick volume, is one of the smallest of the lot; seeming, indeed, almost slim for all its five hundred odd pages, when compared to Reynolds' *Mysteries of the Court*, which ran to some four and a half million words, and Sue's *Mysteries of the People*, which covers two thousand years of history in enough pages to make perhaps fifty modern novels. What is reflected in their bulk is not so much the dream of writing the "total novel," a model of all human experience, like say, Balzac or Faulkner, but rather the hope of entertaining forever an insomniac public quite as tyrannical as the story-loving Sultan of Scheherezade. The pop novel of Sue and Reynolds and Lippard represents, that is to say, a model, not of swarming life, but of the mass media themselves—an unrelenting stream of words intended to combat a finally unmitigatable ennui.

Styleless and structureless, in any classic sense, the genre is also—and most disturbingly, perhaps—characterless. The multitude of persons who move through its pages are not portrayed in any kind of psychological depth; and certainly they never change, since they are representative rather than individual, *given* once and for all rather than developed in time. When such characters become memorable at all, it is as mythic figures, names of mysterious resonance inextricably associated with certain immutable qualities and postures; not as fictional personages, endowed with souls and lifestyles, pasts and futures. Moreover, as mythic figures, they rapidly pass out of their inventor's

hands into the public domain, where they are borrowed with no pangs of conscience by other writers, who sense, perhaps, that their presumed creators merely found them in the communal imagination.

Though *Oliver Twist* and *Old Curiosity Shop* remain basically pop as well, all of Dickens' novels after them aspire to become symbolist rather than mythological—tend, that is to say, toward “High Literature.” So that the single book of Charles Dickens which belongs wholly to the popular genre is *The Pickwick Papers*. The archetypal character of Pickwick (suggested by an engraver to begin with) was appropriated by painters and potters and playmakers, as well as rival pop writers, in especial G. W. M. Reynolds, who sent him to France in *Pickwick Abroad*, gave him a wife in *Pickwick Married* and actually turned him into a teetotaler in *Noctes Pickwickianae*. But why *not*, after all? Had not Dickens himself played a similar game, attempting to reappropriate his own characters (quite as vainly as Shakespeare trying to revive Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*) in *Master Humphrey's Clock*? Pop art, even in the age of individualism, tended to be collective, collaborative—like the slowly accreting epics on one end of the time scale, and corporately produced movies on the other. Perhaps Sue and Lippard, maybe even Reynolds, may have regarded themselves on occasion as lonely artists trying to make a name as well as a fortune by their art. Typically, however, the author of this kind of fiction seems to think of himself as helping, along with his predecessors, contemporaries and ghostwriters to compose an immense, cooperative, nearly anonymous work: a monstrous supernovel, which exists not in any book with its author's name on the spine—but in the heads and hearts of the mass audience.

Difficult as it has been for traditional criticism to come to terms with the antiform of the popular novel, it has been even harder for it to arrive at any final understanding of what is really signified by its antiideas, which is to say, its nonphilosophical themes. There is, however, an essential clue to this in the word “mystery” or “mysteries,” which appears in so many of the titles. As a matter of fact, even Lippard's book smuggles this key word into its second subtitle, “A Romance of Philadelphia Life, Mystery and Crime”; and his German translator-adapter gave it an even more prominent place, calling his version *The Quaker City and its Mysteries*.

In recent times, the word has survived only in our habit of calling detective novels, “mystery stories,” as if the sole mystery in our

existence was "Who done it?" This represents a reduced and demythicized use of a magic term with a long history. It is well to remember that it goes back, in fact, to the early days of the Gothic Romance, when Anne Radcliffe, published *The Mystery of Udolpho*, a classic example of the genre dedicated to evoking the darkness of Medieval times. The mysteries of the 1840's however, were concerned not with what was inscrutable and sinister in the outlived past, but with what remained inscrutable and sinister in the living present; not with the darkness of the dungeons below Medieval castles, but with the darkness of the urban underworld: all that lies beneath the glittering surface of the Big City.

Insofar as the subpornographic novel for males represents an attempt to redeem the modern city for the imagination, to invent a myth of the City as moving and mysterious as the ancient myths of Sea and Forest, it belongs to the mainstream of early "modernist" art; joining the "lowbrow" Sue and Reynolds to the ambiguously "middlebrow" Balzac and Dickens and Dostoevsky, and to such "high-brows" as Baudelaire and Whitman. The obsession with the infernal city suggests, moreover, a link between Lippard and Herman Melville: the latter attempted at least twice (for London in *Redburn*, for New York in *Pierre*) the evocation of urban horror, calling on Dante, for whom "The City" had been a favorite metaphor for hell itself.

The concern with the city as landscape and symbol never quite dies out of "modernism" (think, for instance, of the "Unreal City" of Eliot's *The Waste Land*); but from the time of, say, Arnold Bennett to that of James T. Farrell, there was an attempt to de-mythify the City—to present it as banal rather than horrific. While to Lippard all Cities may have seemed like Cities of the Plain ("Wo Unto Sodom!" cries the slogan on the title page of *The Monks of Monk Hall*), to those who thought of themselves as "realists," such Biblical analogues came to appear merely sensational—and finally irrelevant. In pop culture, however, the image of the City as hidden horror never died, though it was driven underground—to Soho, the Bowery, the Tenderloin, into the aptly named "underworld" of the detective story and the thriller.

In our own century this image of the city has begun to re-emerge—all the more terrifying because of its advanced technology in Science Fiction; first, perhaps as in certain German films, like Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, and then in comic books, whose versions of

the Big City have fed the imagination of a generation of novelists and poets just now coming of age. Such writers have been especially impressed by the urban wilderness of Superman and Captain Marvel: that crime-ridden megalopolis—so conveniently supplied with phone-booths for quick costume changes, and seen always from above—through which Siegel and Shuster's superhero has been pursuing his foes for a quarter of a century now; and that similar one—seen from below, from the abandoned subway tunnel (once more we are underground, which is to say, mythologically at home)—in which the newsboy Billy Batson, saying "SHAZAM," becomes Captain Marvel.

But the task of mythologizing the threat of the City remains divided up in our world—a function shared by the movies, the comics, the novel. Reynolds and Lippard and Sue were moviemakers and cartoonists (with some aid from their illustrators) and makers of fiction in one, encyclopedic pop artists competing with no one except each other. Besides, the mythological city they evoked was still fully erotic, still *female* as it were—neither desexed by technology, nor transformed by the skyscraper into an ikon of a kind of permanent and sterile male tumescence endlessly repeated against the sky. Women could be had, if only in terror—raped, seduced, even killed in passion—in the mythic city of the 1840's; but in the comic book metropolis of post World War II, they could only be eternally fled in a general flight from passion. Sex, the female principle, persists only as the mechanical womb of the telephone booth or the subway, in which human flesh is converted into a kind of superplastic, invulnerable to bullets or love. No wonder that it was necessary to pretend that the pop-horror of the 1950's was intended for kids only! Interestingly enough, there has been an attempt in the dying sixties to introduce sex—even portnography—into the comic books themselves; but this has so far been confined to certain "head" comics, produced for a special audience, the hippy community for whom Mr. Natural seems a more useful symbol than Captain Marvel himself or other more recent inventions for the mass audience like Sub-Mariner or The Hulk.

For the subpornographers of the 1840's, however, the essential image of the mystery under the city was the Gothic whorehouse: a hidden place where, among all the other commodities for sale in the great urban marketplaces, daughters and sisters and wives are being offered to the purchaser rich enough to acquire them. Typically

this place is disguised—as a fashionable milliner's shop in Reynolds', for instance, though it may simply be buried away out of sight, as in Lippard. In any event, it must finally be revealed, exposed—in an age where exploitation, social and sexual, is no longer blatant and open as in pre-Revolutionary days, but concealed behind the facade of "business as usual."

The classic Gothic Novel was radical in its politics, but radical in an oddly retrospective way; which is to say, its authors attacked the inherited evils of the past as represented especially by the Inquisition and the remnants of the Feudal aristocracy. The writers of popular Gothic, on the other hand, fought against the new masters, not the old, the hidden rather than open exploiters: factory owners, capitalists, merchants, as well as the pimps and thugs who serve them, and the lawyers and clergy who provide them cover and camouflage. The popular novel thinks of itself, then, as exposing, revealing, muck-raking; and in this sense, it is closely allied with the illustrated comic newspaper, which appeared just before it, to provide the "inside dope" on those in power—stripping the rich and beautiful naked to provide the impotent poor a kind of vicarious revenge, as well as a sexual *frisson*. Unlike such newspapers, however, the popular novel was aimed not merely at provoking a snigger and grin but a real shudder of horror as well, repulsion tempered with wonder and awe. The popular novel did not utterly reject the comic, but it yearned for the "marvelous," too. And here James Fenimore Cooper provided a more useful model than, say, *Figaro in London* or *Figaro in Sheffield* or *Figaro in Birmingham*, which were already being published in the early 1830's.

Cooper may seem, at first glance, an oddly inappropriate guide for writers about urban life; but there is, as those authors make sufficiently manifest, a sense in which the City can, indeed *must*, come to represent for modern man, as the Ocean and Forest had for his ancestors, what remains hidden and uncontrollable in his own psyche, what survives in him of "The Wilderness": the primitive world out of which his waking self has emerged long since, but to which his dreaming self returns. Intending to build a shelter, a refuge against all that was savage and dark around him, man had (he discovered as the mid-nineteenth century approached) constructed in his cities only a new kind of jungle, a jungle of stone and glass, into which he

ventured as into a strange land. Civilized man, which is to say, the literate European of the 1840's felt first dismay at his alienation in the cities he had built, then excitement. If he was not at home in the urban landscape, he could visit there like a traveller, a tourist.

Romantic exoticism seeks to escape the tedium and alienation of bourgeois life by flight in four directions: Back, Out, In and Down: backward in time like Sir Walter Scott; outward in space like Robert Louis Stevenson; inward toward the murky depths of the unconscious like Rimbaud, or down the social scale like Sue and, after him, the so-called "Naturalists." (It is interesting that Zola wrote one of the last "mysteries," *The Mysteries of Marseille*.) All forms of Romantic Exoticism are kinds of vicarious tourism—the downward variety vicarious "slumming."

The popular novels of the 1840's are, then, like Cooper's exotic novels, expressions of a kind of armchair tourism. And their exoticism had been made possible, even necessary, as a wider and wider gap had opened between the ordinary city-dweller and, on the one hand, the Very Rich, on the other, the denizens of the urban underworld, who came, finally, to seem as remote and romantic as the savages of the American West: the real Apaches—as, in fact, the inhabitants of the Underworld of Paris actually were called . . .

Eugene Sue was aware of how much he owed to Cooper in his mythologizing of the urban wilderness; and it is instructive to read his own words on the subject:

Everybody has read the admirable pages in which Cooper, the American Walter Scott, has traced the fierce customs of the savages; the picturesque and poetic language, the thousand ruses with the aid of which they kill or pursue their enemies.

We are going to try to put before the eyes of our reader some episodes from the life of other barbarians, also outside of civilization, barbarians different from the savage tribes so well depicted by Cooper.

Only the barbarians of whom we are speaking are in our very midst. We can brush against them if we adventure into the hideouts in which they live, where they gather to plot murder, theft; to share the spoils of their victims.

These men have customs of their own, women of their own, a language of their own—a mysterious language full of dark images and of bloody and disgusting metaphors.

ANTIWORLDS

THE WOUND-HEALER

Wound-healing is my trade Healing of wounds
Robespierre himself that chopper-off of heads
one far-off night entrusted to me
that fruitless task of glueing the heads back on
It's thundery I'm getting sick and troubled
It is an effort now to lift those severed heads
a hand perhaps the wrist-joint of a child
or a fistful of hair
I can still manage to pick up and glue back to the dead body
The mud's a nuisance How many pairs of boots
have I worn out — and how many ribbons
accepted gratefully as a reward for my service
And rightly so For surely it is not a matter of indifference
if some dead person who adorns our history
is without a head or without nails or whether
his ribs are stove in for world without end
I'd say it matters And looking after the dead
is a more serious task than looking after the living
But as I've said before — I'm getting weak
and dazed so that in the mornings I scarcely lift
my own head from the gutter
where it falls There are dreams and non-dreams for a dream
is what I long for whether sleeping or waking
and what does not come true And in my non-dreams I see all the
things
which terrify me which depress me
waist-deep in clay All these are lifelike
only more real Thus I see myself
in fields thick with carnivorous grasses
and enormous cabbage-heads which groan
and howl with pain for they are half rotten
And phosphorescent fungi which at midday
raise heads of greying death
and rocking menacingly long in the rhythm
of some strange song that has dissolved like plasma
I'm below ground And sad damp clay

seems to be seething stratified and heaving
until it bubbles and chokes my breath
there's not a blade oh god a single blade which . . . I'm in
heaven
and the rickety trees
which from here grow with their foliage downwards
caress me with their roots with such smooth snakelike gentleness
that I groan crazily I never killed
I only lifted
the bodies from the traps and disentagled them from the wheel
from the trough of the guillotine I would always
lift the heads gently by the hair
and with a rag admittedly not always snowy white
I'd dab the neck and on one occasion I even
used a chamois leather to polish the glasses
of a certain scientist and only then
stitched the bespectacled head back on
Did I not personally
Daily by the gallows
water that bed of white roses
did I not graft and weed to beautify
the place where people said their last farewells
I never killed Only very occasionally
would I complete the strangling of the all-but-strangled
complete the breaking of a neck complete the axe-blow
but always only in the line of duty
in order the sooner to mend and to heal
the wound of the dead Why then and by what right
do they invade my dreams—the white
the airless the croaking dry ones
the morphia addicts exhaled from the organ pipe
behind which sits self-vindictive hate
Why then and by what right do all those heads
winged heads resembling birds come sweeping down on me
from the phantom realm of tumours and worms
why do they sweep across the low horizon
filling the sky from one end to the other
gyrating now in black concentric circles
around *my* head I did not cut them off
I only glued them back . . .

THREE CHEERS FOR HEROD

We
little children in our white shirts
whose blood-stained patches
have long been washed clean
have assembled here
as instructed
to welcome King Herod

We slaughtered children
have had a special area assigned to us in heaven
we have a forest
full of plants and beasts
and grey grottoes in which we hide

We smallest dead
used to believe in our ignorance
that King Herod
was a wicked man
who had us slaughtered
from sheer savagery and hard-heartedness

But now we've been told:
Just look at the forest in which you live
even the smallest song-bird
eats alive the rainbow-hued insects
so as to grow fat
for the belly of some wildcat
the small snakes swallow mice
the big ones swallow rabbits and other beasts
the wolf who today tears up a sheep
will himself when sick be savaged by his brethren
And likewise the plants and flowers
compete for living space
choking each other grabbing each other's soil
and share of sunlight
And far worse still

are things among the humans
who are not merely savage as the beasts
and spiteful towards each other but also
ingenious enough
to perfect their skill in killing

Thus did they speak to us
and boundless horror
gripped our throats
and we cowered lower among the tree roots
and we were thankful
that in this bloodthirsty forest
we are not really alive

And they continued:
There is no love among men
just as there is no love anywhere in the real world
King Herod alone
loved you pure white babes
above everything else
and ordered you to be set free from life
only in order to spare you
its boundless sufferings
Give thanks therefore to your saviour
and if he visits you today
give him your song and cheers

And there were some among us who
called out loud
that there is love in life
that they could still feel it in the palms of their hands
and that King Herod
was nothing but a murderer
who should be cut up
with a chopper
and the pieces then
thrown to the beasts

but the rest of us
silenced them
for we were flooded with joy
and gratitude to the King

and we listened avidly to what they went on to tell us:
Give thanks
Be thankful that you were saved from the world
that vale of tears
where justice is the name
of a blind girl with scales
who has turned all the openings of her body
into wells of plague
Give thanks to King Herod
who has saved you with his boundless love

And we wept
shed tears of regret at the lies and calumnies
which we had been made to believe
and we raised our translucent hands
in thanksgiving for the truth now revealed to us

and so we have gathered together here
around the sacrificial stone
keyed up to sing our welcome
to raise three cheers
for Herod

who comes to kill us for a second time

Josef Hanzlik

(Translated from the Czech by Ewald Osers)

AFTER THE DEFEAT

After the annihilation of the Athenians
at the "Aegos Rivers" and

a bit afterwards,
after our total defeat—we lost the free discussions
and also lost Pericles' glory
the flourishing of Arts, our gymnastics
and the symposiums of our wise men.

Now,
a heavy silence and immense sadness covers the Agora.
The Thirty Tyrants remain unpunished.
All our chores (even the most domestic ones)
are done in absentia, without the least possibility
of help, defense or apologia, or protest
even just for the show.

Our books and papers they have put to fire
and the country's honor has been cast into
their garbage can.

If it were ever possible to get our most trusted friend
as a witness,
he wouldn't accept fearing that our curses
will land on his skull—what can the unlucky fellow do!
That's why everything is all right here!—perhaps
we shall discover a new relation with nature
gazing at the chunk of sea visible from our prison bars,
looking at rocks and herbs
or a cloud at sunset—a cloud heavy with pathos and violets.

Perhaps one day, a new Kimon shall arrive
led secretly, by that same eagle;
to dig and disinter the ironheads of our spears
as they lie in the rust—and that rust is liquidated—
to carry them in secret ceremony
through a funereal or triumphant parade
with music
and wreaths
to Athens.

—*Concentration Camp of Leros, March 3, 1968.*

SONG OF MY SISTER

(written when his sister first struck with tb and then with madness was dying in an asylum)

. . . Once I believed in the sky
but you showed me
the depths of the sea
with the dead towns,
the forgotten forests,
the drowned noises.
The sky, now a wounded seagull,
has plunged into the sea.
This hand that was building for you
the bridge over Chaos
has collapsed.
Look at me:
how naked and innocent
I stand before you.
I am cold, my sister.
Who will bring us sun
to warm our hands?
I am silent. I am listening.
No one passes
our dark street of night.
The stars are shipwrecked
in the corroded eyes
of a plucked eagle
wavering on the edge
of dark ramparts.
Your bound hands
block the exit.
Your voice alone
paces the corridor of night
tapping the tiles
with its long sword.
It is late.
Death rejects me.
Life does not want me.
Where can I go?

Yiannis Ritsos

(Translated from the Greek by Eleni Paidoussi & Dan Georgakas)

Philip L. Greene

THE DICHOTOMY

They were discussing the dichotomy between the essentialists and the existentialists just after the two o'clock class. Sucking on a cigarette Rollie turned in his swivel chair and searched for the right phrase. "What the Platonic world ignores is the . . . human condition. Rudebager in Wisconsin, when I was out there, held that *angst*-less belief is basically a failure of moral nerve. The dichotomy . . ."

"Yes," Malcolm cut in softly, "I see what you mean. I have a very nice student, doing *A-* work actually, who is very excited about the dichotomy. But the boys in my classes don't seem to be interested in that sort of thing. All they want to do is play."

Rollie snickered and swiveled back to his tea. He had to be cautious not to injure Malcolm. Rollie's favorite students confided that Malcolm was a very sweet man, well-prepared and all, but he was so square, he would never talk about sex or anything. They complained that Mr. Duckworth was always talking about image patterns, word clusters and syntactical strategies.

"In my eleven o'clock," Rollie said, "we were discussing the on-going dialogue between Nietzschean *Gott ist tot* and Buber's I-Thou relationship."

"What were you applying it to?"

"We're doing *Catcher in the Rye*. I was comparing Holden's journey with Odysseus's quest. They lit up when I mentioned alienated man. Holden is very Buber-esque. But most of the class think he's sick. We got on to psychic disorder. They like Holden, but they want him to cool it. They're all involved in cool form. Anybody who plays it straight is a 'cop-out.' So I said 'I dig' and they all laughed at me. Anyway, one girl, maybe you know her,

Marvena Portney, sandy hair, big breasts, skinny legs, eyes dilating all the time, a speech and drama major, Marvena shot up out of her chair and ran out of the room holding back the tears."

"What happened?"

"I don't know. She'll be in soon for a conference."

"Yes, it is difficult," Malcolm said with concern. "I never knew what to do with crying students. I usually offer them a clean handkerchief, but they always reach for the kleenex in their bags. They carry everything in those bags. I have a weakness for crying girls with big bags."

"I wonder what they carry in there," Rollie said, slyly.

"Ha, ha," Malcolm said.

"There aren't many virgins left."

"Ha, ha," Malcolm said.

"Do you think there are any virgins left?"

"Some, I guess." Malcolm's voice dropped a bit.

"Do you think they use the pill?"

"The pill? I think not. I don't think they use anything."

"They don't?" Rollie swiveled with the tea cup in his hand.

"The boys probably use something, you know, in the old-fashioned way."

"I hear they use Saran Wrap."

"Saran Wrap?"

"They buy it in the supermarket. No problem with drugstores."

Malcolm shook his head.

"It might be fun," Rollie said.

"Ha, ha," Malcolm said.

Rollie watched Malcolm walk out of the room with a manila folder tucked under his arm, his face composed for official business. He loved to play secret agent. Last year it was a confidential report on the revamped Freshman Contemporary Civilization program. Rollie had talked his way into seeing the report by goading Malcolm into defending the Aristotelian categories by which he was setting up the course. With some delicate maneuvering Rollie managed to show Malcolm that the act-agency formula, good for drama perhaps, would foul itself as an analogue for the literary history of civilization. This year Malcolm was iron-lipped, friendly but alert, jocular but cautious, blue eyes slit with razor-edge awareness. It was already late November and Rollie had not had an inkling of what

the top secret file held. Yesterday evening, after everyone had gone, and the secretary had marched down the hall to powder up, he made a hasty survey of her desk, and came upon a note informing the tenured department members to report at three the next day for a meeting. Sly old Malcolm Duckworth.

Marvena Portney appeared at the door carrying a big, saggy, leather shoulder bag. She was dressed in bohemian black. Rollie swiveled to the girl and motioned her to the conference chair. He clicked on the small desk lamp, lit another cigarette and slid into his favorite ankles-crossed, hands-clasped-on-stomach position. Voices of students on the walk drifted in on the afternoon light.

"Now," Rollie said comfortably, and waited.

Marvena held her bag in her lap and waited.

"Is it the dichotomy?"

"What?"

"You ran out of the room. Did I say something?" Rollie watched Marvena reach in her bag for a lavender tissue.

"It's nothing."

"Do you usually cry over nothing?"

"Sometimes. I don't know. I'm just blue."

"Does Holden have anything to do with it?"

"Well, like you said, there was this dichotomy."

"Yes." For some years now he had understood the meaning of restraint.

"I was thinking of the I-Thou relationship. I have it here in my notes." She reached into her bag and pulled out a notebook. She read: "'Holden's spiritual intercourse with the adult world and its system of values has been short-circuited. In a world without meaning he finds himself pinned to a rock, with the vulture Society pecking away at his heart. The mad world is a ravenous beast bent on devouring its young.' That's just wonderful, Mr. Mergenthaler."

"But it makes you blue." Rollie sat back and mulled his words. He remembered pausing in class before coming out with "spiritual intercourse."

Marvena put her bag on the floor and shifted to a slouch position. In the fading day a small circle of light from the desk lamp glowed brightly. The two faces, hidden in the darkness on either side of the lamp, eased into anonymity. The voices floated over the bridge of light.

"If two people want to relate to each other," Marvena said, "there must be some kind of connection. Isn't Holden kind of disconnected?"

"Yes, but that's what makes him whole. That is the ironic paradox. The existential coming-into-being is a result of this self-confrontation. That is why I used the Prometheus image."

"Isn't the book about love?"

Rollie uncrossed his legs and leaned forward. "That is the dichotomy. How can you love in a loveless world. The ultimate meaning of love is self-love."

"All by yourself?"

"I don't mean you shouldn't have someone. There must always be someone."

"Is that what you call spiritual intercourse?"

"There are many kinds," Rollie said. It was rolling now.

Marvena reached in her bag for another tissue and clenched it in her fist. She wore her hair in the new manner, soft, falling over the eyes. In the lamplight she looked chaste and sensuous. She smiled at him and waited.

"You know the line from Shakespeare," Rollie said, "'Let me not to the marriage of true minds admit impediments?'"

"It's a poem about true love."

"Ah, yes, true love," Rollie said. He thought of himself and Bonnie at Wisconsin in his little cubby-hole office and her pleading little grey eyes blinking true love like a pinball machine. That was the door-opener, but he had difficulty remembering what the heat had been all about. He leaned over to put out his cigarette and brushed against Marvena's hand. She looked up and away quickly.

"The act of love," Rollie said, shifting to a tone of wise counsel, "is a spiritual, you could even call it a religious, encounter. That is probably the underlying meaning of the I-Thou relationship."

"The act of love?" Marvena looked puzzled.

"Making love." The words buzzed across the light. Rollie saw himself and the girl as two poles of a battery with the current sent across the invisible wire of sound. No one had ever clinically pursued the dynamics of the interview situation. There were absolutely no theorists in this field. They had turned a deaf ear on him in Wisconsin when he tried to explain his conference with Clarissa. There had been some bad moments with Bonnie over that.

"The sexual act is a pure thing. It is a form of spiritual intercourse." Rollic swiveled away from Marvena and stared out the window. He wanted her to consult her feelings privately. He turned back quickly with another thought. He was strong now, sure of his way. "Physical union was the price the two in the garden paid for disobeying God. But God meant that carnal knowledge would be a way, a long, suffering, but ultimately beautiful way, back into spiritual identity with God. You see, when Nietzsche said God is dead he meant that the orgasm had been separated from its purpose. In existential terms, man has lost contact with the original, spiritual purpose of sexual life. He has lost touch with himself."

Marvena, her lipstick caked on her parted mouth, uttered a small, bewildered sigh. "I never thought of that."

"What do you think?"

"About what?"

"About that."

"You mean that."

"Well, that's what we have been talking about, isn't it?" Rollic believed in listening to his inner ear, the timing mechanism which announced that the moment of truth was at hand. He remembered the time Susan, a black-eyed Economics major, a type he had not encountered, and the premature timing, the inner ear warning him, but he had jumped the gun, and the whole construction, every brick of irrefutable logic, crumbling like sand. He had tried Krafft-Ebing on her, she was very bright. Marvena needed different tactics. She was very good in class, but she had a book mind.

"I have a girl friend," Marvena said, "she's pinned to this fellow in Law School. We have discussions about this. Aileen says she couldn't walk down the aisle if she knew she had done anything. So, I asked her if Fred is just a soul mate. They've been going together for a year. She says Fred believes a woman should be put on a pedestal, but I know Fred, I used to go out with him, and every once in a while you have to get off the pedestal. I don't mean they should go the limit, although a lot of girls around here do. I know a girl I won't mention her name, but everybody on the campus knows about her. Who's going to marry her? She is soiled linen, a tramp. But if there is real love, maybe something like what you say, a kind of spiritual thing, people who have lots of personality and they like the same things, then I don't think it's so terrible if

they fool around a little. Do you know what I mean, Mr. Mergenthaler?"

Rollie looked at the black mesh stockings with flecks of skin showing through her crossed legs. The holes were too big, the skin chalky and flat. Her nostrils flared too much. Her arms showing through her sleeveless black sweater were freckled with large greenish spots. Her eyes had the look of burnt bacon. She was a petting-to-the-climax specialist, a manipulator of small triumphs out of which one manages to fashion major spiritual defeats. Rollie abhorred the sexual Philistine.

He leaned over and patted her once, then again, letting his hand linger an instant longer on the black mesh. He felt the leprous, corroding flesh turn to flame at his touch. "I think women got off the pedestal a long time ago," he said. He thought of Melanie Armbruster, who had tricked him into agreeing that yes love was a many splendored thing and the heart has its reasons and how do I count the ways. And here was Marvena Portney, the Eastern archetype, *la femme moyenne sensuelle*, the back-seat sensualist with a front-seat philosophy.

Marvena rose suddenly and apologized to Mr. Mergenthaler, she had car-pool responsibilities, three other kids were waiting for her. Could she see him next week about her paper? Rollie watched her skitter down the hall, hair bouncing gently, buttocks jiggling confidently, flying to join the pedestal-burners.

The phone call home was tender, conciliatory. Did Bonnie have a good day with the kids? It is rough not having a girl coming in. They would drum up the money to put Jessica into nursery school. Next semester he would definitely ask for no night classes. They never get to see each other. When tenure came things would change. No more hopping around from school to school. Was Rollie having a conference? Please dear, couldn't he cut down on the conferences, for a little while? She shouldn't worry, he keeps the door open and the conferences short. What else could he do? They come after him.

As Rollie hung up Malcolm came in and slipped his folder into the desk drawer. Malcolm had the mysterious document look about him, the neck sitting stiffly on the porcine shoulders, the faded blue eyes tilting left and right in search of rats in the corner, the girlish hands furtive and nervous, dancing over the papers on his desk. Rollie shopped around for a vulnerable point of entry. Some

time ago he had discovered Malcolm's weakness for Lewis Carroll and J. M. Marrie, and the Milne stuff, things Malcolm finally confessed in absolute confidence that he read at night instead of detective stories. Malcolm had shown him his Beerbohmish parodies of the children's classics, fey, sparkling little things, colored by cute adult sexual innuendos.

"I'm absolutely washed out," Malcolm said, paving the way.

"Must have been a rough meeting."

"Nasty."

Rollie didn't want to push. Malcolm was a liberal humanist. If there had been injury at the meeting he would talk. He recalled Malcolm standing up at a faculty meeting, his voice shrill with passion, to defend on principle the hearing rights of a dismissed instructor. The weak, the lame, the halt, the unprotected brought Malcolm to the ramparts.

"There was a heated discussion," Malcolm said, after a while.

"Yes." Rollie grouped factions quickly. He was sure of at least three people. But there was Buckley and his Renaissance Puritanism, a cold, murderously isolated man who despised students.

"Well, I might as well tell you." Malcolm clasped and unclasped his hands.

"Buckley wants us to sign a Code of Ethics, something like a loyalty oath. I think teachers have an important function. *In loco parentis* has been a motto of mine. But this has the odor of McCarthyism."

"What does he want?"

"I'm not at liberty to say just yet. But I can tell you this. He feels tenure should not be given if the candidate doesn't measure up to the code. My goodness, right now I'm committing a terrible breach of ethics."

"What are you not at liberty to say?"

"Well, you know."

"What do I know?"

"I can't say."

"The idea of an ethics code has merit." Rollie said, lighting up a cigarette and swiveling in a wide slow turn. "As a department of Civilization we should be committed to a philosophy. Heidegger's *Dasein*, his being-in-the-worldness is a form of action ethics, a restoration of a condition upset by the Cartesian dichotomy. The mind-body

split disappears. To shift the image, Nietzschean Apollonian—Dionysianism is part of the picture. A modern ethics which addressed itself to a pure existence philosophy, a naked facing of the what-iness of the human condition, this would be a great thing. I suppose Buckley didn't have this in mind."

"Well, I don't think so." Malcolm's eyes were glazed.

"I've always held for a *modus vivendi* that would satisfy our need for identity."

"I think Buckley had something else in mind."

"What did he have in mind?"

"I really can't say."

"Is he after me?"

"Not exactly."

"What is he after exactly?"

"More basic considerations." Malcolm patted his forehead with a handkerchief.

"Like what?"

"Oh, you know, the public image."

"Yes, of course, I can understand that." Rollie had meant to get rid of his old sharkskin suit, the blue-grey one with the bus driver's shine in the seat. "How is mine?"

"You talk in the dark."

"You mean in conference?"

"With female students."

"That's a bad image."

"You could put on the light."

"I have to find out what is hurting. It's better in the dark. Do they hate me for that?"

"Nobody hates you."

"They don't love me."

"Ah, well."

Malcolm had to dash home to feed Archimedes, his dog. On the way out he handed Rollie his folder. "I'm violating a confidence, but if you keep it to yourself . . . this is strictly *entre nous*."

After Malcolm had gone Rollie went down the hall to the hot plate and poured a cup of tea. The day people had gone and the night people had not yet arrived. The hallway was quiet except for the scraping of the porter's trash barrel at the other end. To Rollie the twilight hour was a time when naked hallway bulbs and im-

passive porters with noisy barrels struck the right note of portent. What concatenation of events would express exactly the terrors of the dark night of the soul?

He closed his door, sat down, blew on his tea, lit a cigarette, sipped and read Buckley's proposal, a series of Mosaic commandments, which warned the instructor that thou shalt not dress unseemly, thou shalt not be late for class, thou shalt not hunger after popularity, thou shalt not serve Mammon, thou shalt not turn out the lights in the office, thou shalt not covet students in conference. Above all, thou shalt not commit Conference Ambience, a configuration of conferences which create an atmosphere of provocative intimacy. Malcolm's spider script followed the injunction with the minutes of further discussion about the aims and goals of the department that must fulfill the needs and wants of students. Orientation toward ethical attitudes is a primary aspect of the harmonious adjustment of the staff-student relationship. Undoubtedly, the educational values which are in reality the target-goal, should be fostered, if not indeed enhanced, by a code of ethics which announces boldly principles of belief in the inherent dignity of the experiential validity of college life.

The committee voted unanimously to form a committee that would investigate the procedural matters involved in the final wording of a Code of Ethics for the Department of Civilization. Malcolm's note at the bottom read: "See RM about conference ambience."

Rollie closed the folder, put out the light and turned his chair toward the window. He watched the cars of the evening students stream into the parking lot. Tonight he would deliver Montaigne on friendship and love to the tired, blank, sullen faces. He would administer the alchemist's potion and see the dull stirrings of their thick blood spirit them into new being. They would pummel at the door of his sensibility and shout to be let into the secret chambers of consciousness. "Mr. Mergenthaler, I never knew I could feel," "Mr. Mergenthaler, I understand now," "Mr. Mergenthaler, you have given me a new. . . ." Falling to their knees, they would touch the hem of his cloak, and he would console. In the Judaic-Christian heritage man was conceived as tragic, suffering, alien, estranged from the body of the world, estranged from the godhead within. Embrace the stranger in you, make love to the enemy within. Find in yourself your existence. Bind the dichotomy, make a knot of the

graceful and the grotesque. Deliver yourself out of bondage to Egypt in you. Restore yourself to the terrible freedom of the self. Tear down the walls of the temple.

Rollie put his head down on the desk over his folded arms and waited for the burning hum in his eyes to stop. Buckley would bury him. He was the spokesman for the ethical headhunters, those cannibals of heart who cowered behind their forms, as if they had no secret life. Had he not told them all that man trembles at the abyss of freedom when he discovers the body is not a cage for the spirit? Let the bird of joy and love out and plunge full-plumed into the dark, liberating waters below. The smirky smiles, the frozen pieties carved in their cheeks, the drip and dribble of their rational sensibilities were everywhere. Even poor, sweet Malcolm minced along, delivering his tepid bromides, tuning in surreptitiously to Rollie's conferences, licking his thin, vicarious lips with salacious hunger.

Rollie rose and went to Malcolm's desk and file cabinet. Hidden somewhere in the years of departmental espionage was a secret hoard, Rollie didn't know what, some evidence perhaps of a former colleague's demise, and ugly truth scavenged on the endless hunt for the enemy. He tried Malcolm's closet, and pulled out several cartons of old texts, term papers, departmental memos, flyers from book companies, notes and plans and pamphlets — a junk yard of educational debris, stored and treasured, a legacy of a lifetime of service to the institution. Methodically, Rollie stripped each carton, book by book, paper by paper, until, at last, in a sturdy carton marked Seagram's V-O he came upon a bulky manila envelope tied with string. He untied the string carefully and slipped out the contents onto the desk. Eight-by-ten photographs, two or three dozen, sparkled in the reflected light of his desk lamp. Oiled young gods in loin cloths with pouting stoic faces glared up at him, flexing bulging biceps and staunch thighs, swarthy Latin Adonises and sunburned Teutons, firm-jawed sculptures in flesh, mindless beauty fixed in time and space, a small army of heroes of the body poised in triumphant vanity. Malcolm's lovers cached away in the bottom of a whiskey carton. How many times had Malcolm tied and untied that string? How many times had he run his puffy, docile hands over the glossy bodies? How many times had he dreamed of being locked in lubricous arms?

A soft knock on the door broke his reveries. Rollie hurriedly tied the envelope, replaced it in the carton and pushed it back into the closet. He opened the door and ushered in his conferee, Sherry, a twenty-one-year-old divorcée majoring in Civilization at night. Her first paper on love among the Medici had shown astonishing insight, written in a kind of serene prose, disengaged, without nervous tics and cute defenses of the average paper. She said she wouldn't dream of writing a paper without first freeing herself, and Mr. Mergenthaler could free himself too. She would help him if he was interested.

"I brought the stuff," she said, as she took Marvena's seat.

Rollie liked to work his way into a subject. Her abruptness disturbed him.

"What stuff?"

"I told you I would turn you on."

"I have a class in an hour."

"We can share a joint. You'll teach up a storm." She reached into her bag and took out a cigarette, loosely wrapped, with the paper twisted at one end.

"Doesn't it make you kind of free, sexually, that is?" Rollie asked, looking at the cigarette.

"You know it," she said. She took out a pack of matches and started to strike one.

"Wait a minute," Rollie said. "I want to talk about this a little more. I don't know what I'm supposed to feel. Do you get high, like with liquor? Is there a big release?"

Sherry leaned back in her chair and sighed. "Larry, my ex-husband, he asked me the same thing. What does it feel like? Will I get hooked? He was afraid he would lose his substitute teacher's license."

"Malraux had an opium smoker in his book, *Man's Fate*. He tries to show a spiritual nirvana, a lucid self-awareness as a result of the drug. I was wondering whether marijuana might not combine spirit and sense in a meaningful way, so that the essential I-Thouness could be achieved. You know, a short cut from the meditative procedure recommended by ecclesiasts."

Sherry looked at him for a moment and lit the cigarette. "Here, you have got to take in air, a lot, as you puff. There's a lot of I-Thouness in every puff. There is probably even some you-meness too."

Rollie puffed and Sherry puffed and an acrid haze hung thinly in the room. They talked through the haze:

SHERRY: Cool, isn't it?

ROLLIE: I don't feel anything.

SHERRY: Time wounds all heels.

ROLLIE: I expected *Walpurgisnacht*.

SHERRY: You know it.

ROLLIE: What am I supposed to feel?

SHERRY: It'll come.

ROLLIE: I believe in feeling.

SHERRY: It's the only thing.

ROLLIE: I could run on that platform.

SHERRY: You're the most.

ROLLIE: I think I hear something in my head.

SHERRY: You are getting there.

ROLLIE: Should it buzz or hum?

SHERRY: Just let it come.

ROLLIE: I lost it.

SHERRY: I got my own problems.

ROLLIE: I think I ought to do something. Maybe it's happening.

SHERRY: It's a happening.

ROLLIE: Maybe there should be a click or something. I believe there should be a click.

SHERRY: Cool it, baby.

ROLLIE: Why do you keep saying that? I want to hot it.

SHERRY: Stay loose.

Rollie got up, reached over and put his hand on Sherry's breast. She was wearing a sweater. Sherry looked up at him. "What's your problem?"

"I always start with the breast," Rollie said.

"Oh, all right."

Rollie put his other hand on the other breast. He stood over her with two hands on her two breasts. "I may lose my job. I'm up for tenure," he said.

"Huh?"

"Your breasts are soft and warm. Mushy." She didn't answer. "I'm dying of a fatal disease," he offered.

"Cancer."

"Conference Ambience." He let go and slumped into his seat. The back of his head felt thick, knotted. The girl's intolerable eyes, blistered and porous, were fixed on the book shelf on Malcolm's wall. She seemed to be reading the Handbook and Rhetoric section with fierce concentration.

"You poor kid," she said without interest.

"Without a goal-oriented philosophy where can you go?"

"I'm stoned."

"I look at your hair, your face. You have a disaffiliated face. Centuries of disaster have emptied you of meaning. A little Zoroastrian pot to make the world go round. Sherry, a tragedy." He leaned over and tried the breast again.

"Two for a quarter," she said.

The door opened and the porter with his big trash barrel stood with immigrant servility. "Excuse," he said and trudged in to empty the waste baskets. Slowly, Rollie took his hand away and sank back in his chair. After emptying the baskets the porter worked his push broom around their chairs excusing himself with garlic grunts. Rollie swiveled himself across to Malcolm's side of the room, the casters squeaking loudly against the floor. The porter bent under Rollie's desk and the broom whisked out one of Malcolm's glossy heroes that had slipped from the desk. "Pretty man," the porter said as he handed it to Rollie. At the doorway he turned back and smiled. Rollie caught the tender curve of his mouth and felt his heart give a frightened leap. Sherry got up and took the photograph from Rollie's slack hand and held it under the desk light.

"Oobie doo."

Rollie pressed his hands over the bridge of his nose and listened to the sound of the porter's barrel down the hall. The cigarette had left a dry, papery taste in his mouth. He took the photograph from Sherry and put it in his drawer.

"Oobie doo to you too," he said.

On his way home after class in his station wagon he thought of something he had said to Malcolm earlier about satisfying his need for identity. The porter's grainy face and quick smile flickered in front of him. Oobie doo, Sherry had said. He turned the car around, went back to the darkened office, pulled out the body folder and drove over to Malcolm's house. Malcolm answered the door in a

Chinese robe and big, furry slippers. He offered Rollie a glass of port and set out on a Delft dish some Huntley and Palmer biscuits.

"My aunt sends me a package every year from London. Like Girl Scout cookies," he said, taking a chair opposite the couch Rollie had slumped in. Malcolm crossed his legs and pulled the silky robe over his knees. His hairless calves stuck out from beneath the robe.

"I would like to try your bar bells," Rollie said.

"Bar bells?"

"Your weights. You use weights, don't you?" Rollie's voice cracked. He sipped some wine and twisted the stem of the glass in his fingers.

Malcolm crossed his legs and smoothed the robe again. "I have an exercise bicycle in the cellar. You are welcome to it."

"Is that what you use? Let me ask you something. Do you believe in original sin? I'm sure you think about things like that. The redemptive theory. How do you buy back what you have lost? How does one redeem oneself?"

"You could save enough S & H Green Stamps. I'd say I'm worth about one and a half books."

"Do you keep oil? I might like to try the oil."

"What oil?" Malcolm's tone was pitched a bit higher.

"Body oil. After the weights."

"What are you after?" Malcolm was tense, hostile. His white, beardless face showed patches of red under the cheekbones.

"What I'm after. What I'm after." Rollie shrugged and drained his glass. "I'll confess. I'm after the Redemptive Principle. Man is alone confronting the void. No original sin. Martin Buber says . . . Never mind. The agony of self knowledge. Who are you? Who speaks for man?" He paused and turned on Malcolm. "Where do you keep your weights?"

"I'm really very tired."

"Here's something to perk you up." Rollie opened his briefcase and took out Malcolm's envelope. He untied the string and shook the photographs out on the couch. "Pretty men," he said, trying on the porter's smile.

Malcolm stood over the pictures, rubbing his sweating palms. The big, furry slippers held up pelican ankles. He picked up one of the photographs with listless fingers.

"I'm all alone in this thing," Rollie went on. "Everywhere I go

it's the same. What have I done to deserve such despise? I need some more wine."

Malcolm waved in the direction of the decanter, picked up the rest of the pictures and sat down, dealing them in his lap. The robe had slipped from his thighs, exposing clean milk-white flesh. Rollie filled his glass and paced the floor, sipping and waving as he walked. "I know this may hurt you, but I see it as an act of compassion. The right hand feeds the left, or something like that. I mean there is nothing *wrong* in this." He took the pictures from Malcolm's lap. "But do you think they would understand? I saw Buckley's Proposal. You and me, Malcolm, they are after us. The bearers of light. Prometheans. That's what we are." He dropped the pictures into Malcolm's lap. Malcolm leaned his head against the high back of the Queen Anne chair with green and blue paisley slipcovers.

"As a child I was the marble's champion of my street," Malcolm said, shuffling the pictures. "Mary Lee Danforth and I would play doctor. Once I stuck my finger in her vagina for five marbles. She didn't care. She was a terrible tomboy. All she wanted was the marbles championship. When I was thirteen I offered Mary Lee my marble collection. She asked me what I wanted for it. She would have done anything, I guess. She didn't want the marbles anymore. She was smoking by that time. I told her it was a gift. I wanted nothing. Mary Lee ran off with a Mexican trumpet player when she was fifteen. It was this finger." Malcolm lifted the index finger of his left hand.

"I use the middle finger," Rollie said.

"Yes," Malcolm said absently.

"I didn't mean anything," Rollie said.

"I want to show you something." Malcolm shuffled to the closet in the foyer and took down a square tin canister from the shelf. He held it in his upturned palms, bearing it like a precious gift. "I've kept it all these years. Would you like to have it?"

Rollie hesitated, and then reached for the canister. As offered the gift, Malcolm shuddered, his hand jerked back. Rollie flinched and the canister fell to the floor, the lid popped off and the marbles spilled to the floor. As they reached the end of the rug the marbles clattered on to the wood.

Malcolm dropped to his knees and scurried along the rug. "My marbles. I lost my marbles," he called out to no one in particular.

"I'll help you," Rollie said, and he fell to his knees, and with swift, precise sweeps of his hand he gathered marbles. Together they popped the marbles back into the canister.

"Would you like to play a game?" Malcolm asked, as he held the canister in his arms. He explained that he had become a champion by playing for hours on the Oriental rug, not nearly as good as the Kerman on the floor now, but also full of intricate patterns, with many targets that required control and patience. "Do you see the fleur-de-lis in the center of the rug? You shoot for that. Shall we start?"

They reached into the canister for shooting marbles. Rollie selected a clear glass marble with light sweeping wisps of clouds. Malcolm chose a yellow and blue swirl with a roughened surface, his favorite shooter. Rollie held the marble in his warm palm and felt a hollowness in his head. The port and the marijuana were probably working their way in. He knew he should call Bonnie and tell her not to worry, that he would be late playing marbles with his friend Malcolm, but she might try to reason with him and he didn't want that.

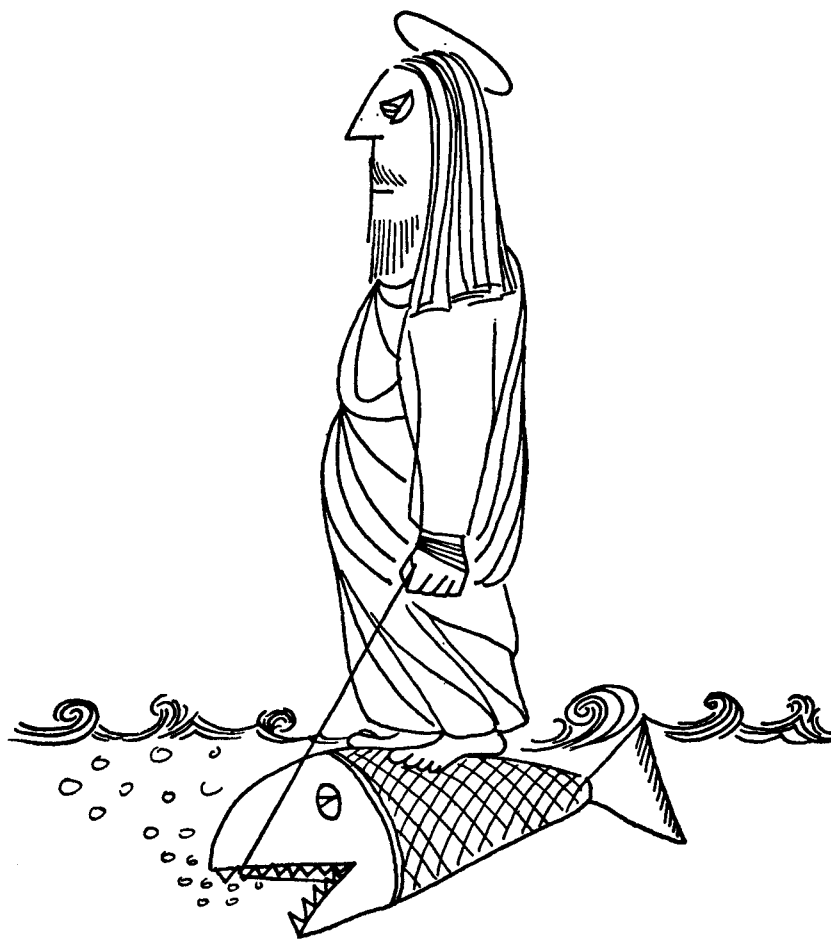
"You know," he said, quickly, with a tone of candor that promised a revelation, "this afternoon when I was discussing the dichotomy . . ."

"Oh, that old thing," Malcolm said. "Come on, let's play."

"O.K.," Rollie said, ballooning out a gust of stale breath. He looked at Malcolm on his knees, marble in hand, with his Chinese kimono and his furry slippers, and wondered what it was all about.

"Shoot," Rollie said, feeling a catch in his throat, as he cast his first marble.

CHARISMA



BUS

Mark Jay Mirsky

GOING TO THE MOVIES

"The Great American Movie!" In search of that cliché-en-crusted fountain I go searching to renew myself in the jungles of Hollywood cinema. Someone will capture it, the saga of innocence in this generation. Fielding left the stage for the novel, at this moment perhaps a screenwriter of genius is abandoning the novel for the movie. At this moment, but not before, alas.

I was most disappointed by *Alice's Restaurant*, perhaps because there is in the film a genuine, crazy American talent, the folksinger Arlo Guthrie. The acting that goes on around his remarkable presence seems forced, fake, staged. Indeed through most of the movie he seems to be looking at the audience out of the corner of his eye, slightly embarrassed by the proceedings. The song on which the film is based is a zany, shaggy-dog ballad, one that twangs with the flat, dry humor of the Arkansas Traveler. Fragile stuff, like Richard Brautigan's *Trout Fishing in America* and Ted Berrigan's poetry, but when successful it turns the pinched cowboy-policeman I-could-care-less-face of this country to the mirror for a hard stare at caricature. The insane, mechanical seriousness of Authority going about its ludicrous business with a straight face is a perfect target for that old Yankee strategem the put-on. The song celebrates outfacing the system, letting it fuck itself up, just giving it enough rope to hang itself. So a conviction for criminal littering releases Arlo from his obligation to the Draft and while the average teen-ager can't hope that his local board will be that joyously stupid, the clear implication is — be oneself, long-haired, innocent of inhibition, stoned and the neighborhood dragons may well bite their own tails.

Insofar as the film follows the song it has resonance as a Hippie folktale with its "don't throw me in dat briar patch" ending. Arthur Penn could not resist throwing in all the junk and plastic props of a second-rate potboiler. So we have love interest tacked on, the death of a heroin addict, shmaltz of his burial, sentimental moralizing about Alice and her husband and most painful, I imagine, for Arlo Guthrie, a mawkish reenactment of his famous father's death. This final touch,

while it inevitably jerks a few tears out, for who among us does not reverence Woody Guthrie, is so crude in retrospect as to make me bitterly resent liking anything in the movie. It is inevitable, however, that a slickie like Arthur Penn has to exploit the artifacts of the younger generation in order to translate them into box office material. In doing so he destroys both the form and feeling of the original song.

Alice's Restaurant hearkens us back to *Bonnie and Clyde*. In *Bonnie and Clyde* there was a wonderful attention to the details of the Depression world, the scene on the Texas plains where Bonnie meets her dried-up, shriveled kinsfolk, shivering in poverty, struck me as honest and moving, but the casting of the two leads destroyed the intention to create a believable milieu. Take a look at the faces of the real Bonnie and Clyde in newspaper photos; they are lean, hungry Appalachians, staring out with the mad intensity of Snopes or Flannery O'Connor characters. The Bonnie and Clyde of Hollywood play at being bank robbers, but the actual Bonnie and Clyde did something far more pathetic — they played at being Hollywood.

Is *Easy Rider* slick? The mumbled dialogue, wildly varying film quality, missing plot, rumors that many were high in the shooting of it, all seem to disclaim this. Indeed its sloppiness is at times a virtue; we enjoy for awhile the fallacy of imitative form, the confusion of the filmmakers mirrors the confusion of their hash-brained world and we live the fog they are recording. But, at last, enough; the dialogue is so bad, Jesus, Terry Southern should be ashamed of letting his name be associated with it. And the plot, it's over in the first five minutes, the bikers earning a fat wad by smuggling heroin. So why tack it on? Why not just start by speeding Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper toward New Orleans on a joy ride. This film is in rough shape though because it's not a joy ride but a bad propaganda trip and it takes itself "real serious." And it's full of shit.

I don't think I'm a prig. I'll go along with legalizing marijuana. I'm curious about group sex. I know that cops can be "Pigs." I love motorcycles and while the "freaks" with German helmets and chains around their middles scare me, I have a lot of respect for the machinery they build and ride. But *Easy Rider* cashes in on a simpleminded endorsement of the "hip" side of these issues. A friend of mine argues that Peter Fonda's stiffness is purposeful, but I'm sorry, I've seen his work before. A tight-mouthed, holier-than-thou, real cool expression on his puss right through the movie. The only moment he relaxes is when he shows the lawyer how to smoke a joint. *Easy Rider* borrows everything from Fonda's expression. It reeks of piety: evil America won't

let us do our thing. The truth is, America's full of contradictions. It's often even curious about freaks, since it's pretty freaky on its own. And so I object to the drunken ACLU lawyer as the only helping hand in the Confederacy. Ride into Southern gas stations on those gleaming Harleys and you'd probably have the local mechanics lollygagging and soaping you left and right.

What makes the sloppiness and cliché of *Easy Rider* so sad is that the world they promise to explore is fascinating. The motorcycle is really a kind of mechanized horse and it's a brutal, glorious feeling to ride one. It is no wonder that the outlaw fringe of society in the West gravitates toward bikes, and there is a strange connection between the bikers and hippies, witness Ken Kesey and Allen Ginsberg's reception of the Hell's Angels. So the best parts of *Easy Rider* are just coasting through the great broad space of America on those bikes. And this is the cheat of the movie, the peremptory treatment of the motorcycles; nowhere do I feel Dennis Hopper's or Peter Fonda's love for his machine.

Seriously flawed as they are, why do *Easy Rider* and *Alice's Restaurant* fascinate such a large and relatively intelligent public. Perhaps because they have an undertone that is totally new to the American film consciousness, one sensed in *Dr. Strangelove*, *The Loved One*, but now nakedly apparent, a radical point of view, a background which shouts out that the Establishment in America is against youth and will brutally if stupidly guard its dignity and prerogative. We go into these movies with the consciousness of Chicago and Mayor Daley, Attorney General Mitchell's manipulations against Panthers, Morgenthau, Bank reform, Agnew's Yahooism, the guilt of the Vietnam War and since man is a political animal we are moved powerfully, often almost religiously, even when as in *Z*, the horror of events degenerates into horse opera. However banal the drama, when it touches the deep dread in this democracy of repression, it is hard not to start and choke with rage.

If the foregoing movies show a new consciousness in politics they do equally well in sex. Despite the Nestle bittersweet ending of *Alice's Restaurant*, the wages of sin sure are fun, and the naked bathing scene in *Easy Rider* looks good enough to jump in and splash around myself. It's boring to watch someone get high on marijuana or L.S.D. (which is one of the problems in *Easy Rider*), but seduction is a pleasure to behold.

Yet, I cannot leave these movies in terms of just sex, drugs, new politics, because I myself believe that they touch, half consciously, on the search by the generation in its twenties now, for some Eden here. So that the Hippie commune in *Easy Rider* and *Alice's* Thanksgiving party are, however awkwardly staged, moments when I feel the tug of hope,

that Paradise may not be so far away, that at least some are not cynical of attaining it.

Midnight Cowboy is flawed by the obverse of the casting mistake in *Alice*. Whereas Arlo Guthrie's relaxation made his Hollywood colleagues look phoney, Dustin Hoffman's performance, coughing, limping, Ratso, a fever-wracked highschool dropout of the Italian Greenwich Village slums, is such overwhelming bravura that it jars my belief in events. Again, the strength of the film lies in documentary, the long bus ride from a little southwestern town, the gorgeous panoply of a Hippie party in New York City, occasional glimmers of the sex life in home-town America. There is cowardice in the writing of *Midnight Cowboy*. A story is set up but never explored. John Voight, musky with virility, comes to the City, secretly traumatized but ready to offer his services as a male stud. We watch his inevitable comic attempts to get started in business, then at last, his first success. Now, the story is really interesting; we are in the world of Andy Warhol, a vampish lady and a country yokel. Can it work, what will he learn, where will it end; dang, Dustin Hoffman shows up again with his depressing cold and we are whisked away on a melodramatic voyage to death in Miami. Boo! Boo!

Midnight Cowboy shares with *Alice's Restaurant* and *Easy Rider* a subliminal text. Its antihero, John Voight, is the victim of a repressive Puritan society; the flashbacks indicate that he has been caught with his high school sweetheart in the act of intercourse and punished brutally. (Frankly John Schlesinger could have made a much better film if he'd just stayed in the world of the flashbacks.) Again, a subtle preaching, which brings up an advertisement for *Hail Hero*.

The generation gap is more than just long hair, loud music, or a misunderstanding of ideals between father and son. It is a void from which a new force must emerge, a new hero.

The picture of its long-haired, bland, "swinging" male lead is a clear indication of the "blowing in the wind." And this is the kind of movie earmarked for Radio City Music Hall.

Politics in Eden, that seems to be the persistent metaphor haunting the films today; the Blue Meanies despoil and threaten, for children, the fairy-tale land to which the *Yellow Submarine* ventures, for adults, the sexual gardens of *Alice* and *Easy Rider*. We are now asked to identify the sensualities of Spenser's *Bower of Bliss* with the chaste innocence before the Fall. Right or wrong, the reawakening awareness of the noble savage means that the sex movie now carries a revolutionary message, personal and political. So it is no accident that two films differing so

widely in content, form and intention as *Duet for Cannibals* and *I am Curious (Yellow)* should share the same ingredients. It is perhaps a disservice to Susan Sontag's carefully wrought *Cannibals* to yoke it with such a sloppy, careless bedfellow as *Curious Yellow*, but both assume the heroism of permissive sex and radical left-wing politics. *Curious Yellow* is a hodgepodge that makes *Easy Rider* seem like the sheerest classical restraint and again the temptation is to yield to this octopus, so like the heroine's sexual promise, float in a soft, funny miasma, but boredom will have its say and after awhile, one is yawning in the midst of her orgasms.

It need not have been so. The outline of a story surfaces now and then in the sea of celluloid from which they cut the film; those pathetic moments between father and daughter when the former finds himself helpless and curious in the face of his offspring's sexual rapacity; the much touted scene of screwing in front of the stiff soldiery guarding a regal residence; a romp in the crotch of an old, huge tree, erupting into the veined limbs of a dignified forest patriarch. These are brief flashes of a terrible curiosity which we share with the world peeping into the characters' lives. A world that they dare to be curious about. But so much of their nakedness is sloppy and breezy that all sense of privacy is lost. They don't care, why should we? The politics they are involved in borrows this flipness, and so after awhile, the whole bag seems a tedious interminable joke. Radical politics is like a game, so much so that the film at times is an exercise in unintentional irony.

In *Duet for Cannibals* the politics are deadly serious, but sex is open for experiment. In this sense the film feels old-fashioned; yet its power is in this aura, of an older puritan tradition coiling to show an underbelly of repressed lust and madness. Certainly the sex is much more erotic than in *I am Curious* if only because taboos are being violated by people to whom they mean something; therefore, the swapping of partners is not bored but tense with obscenity, prurient emotion. I came away shaken by the cruel pleasure one was forced to experience watching the young couple writhe and yielding to temptation. I quarrel, however, with the director's pacing of her film, so slow that one caught sight of the twist in the road long before the action arrived there. And I object to a certain cuteness in the older couple, too much like puppet-masters doing their tricks. It is no wonder that though the older man is presented as a famous left-wing political figure, a friend of Brecht's, we learn nothing about his work, nor about the torment that drives him to sex games. The older people remain too clever an enigma.

Coming Apart has the weakest story line of all the films reviewed

so far. It smells of Actor's Studio and the improvisational theater. One pretty girl, woman, child, after another comes into the apartment of Rip Torn turned psychiatrist, filming them, himself (in the throes of a nervous breakdown). A good gimmick. Rip is coming apart; his face twitches with pain, he cries, laughs, all for the camera. The gimmick is the self-destruction of the film. Always in front of the camera there is a desperate showmanship in the goings-on; too truthful, they degenerate into method moments or jerk along with the monotony of case studies. Everything begins to seem superficial, too many women, too little scrutiny into any one life, the living room too small for epic drama.

In the midst of these goings-on a young girl wanders in, the daughter of some well-known writer, and a story starts to grow before our eyes; can Rip find happiness here even as he mocks her pseudo-tough talk and drug experience? Suddenly there is the tension between an older and younger generation that gave *Duet for Cannibals* the spring of its action. Unfortunately, it is never developed.

I look back at these films (Miss Sontag's excepted) and think, where's the writer? Where is someone to let them know that they lost their way in the narration and missed the path to a story they might have surprised themselves to tell.

REMARKS

On most questions, the Left has been opposed almost on principle to the official position of the Government. But by some strange convergence, Israel has become the victim both of the power politics of the Big Four and of the ultra-highmindedness of the Left.

England and France, as well as the Soviet Union, have been playing the old power game in the Middle East, while America, stunned by its failure in Vietnam, has expressed its newly found caution by trying to play both sides.

On the other hand, many liberals and radicals, particularly the militant blacks, have taken pro-Arab or neutralist positions. Cleaver and Carmichael, for example, have identified the Arabs with North Vietnam and Israel with American imperialism. (If, as some charge, Israel is an "outpost of American imperialism," President Nixon seems not to have been informed.) And an internationalist like Chomsky, ignoring the patent Arab and Soviet provocations, has proposed a standard socialist solution. Put forward as a political abstraction, Chomsky's long perspective presents an appealing vision of a socialist community in the Middle East sometime in the future. Its meaning for the present is not so clear: so far as one can make out Chomsky seems to be demanding the instant withering away of the state of Israel while calling for no such revolutionary changes in the Arab countries.

Who can object to the investment of one's hopes in genuinely socialist societies? But meanwhile, back in the here and now, it's clear that the current level of military activity is being maintained not by Israel but by the Arabs, who, after all, invited the Six Day War, and the Soviet Union, who stimulated it. One might argue about the right of the Jews to be in Israel in the first place; but it is now a *fait accompli* and can be reversed only by the kind of extermination threatened by the Arabs.

The threat of war is an Arab threat. If the Arabs wanted to prove that Israel is the aggressor, all they have to do is control their guerrilla activities and then leave it to the rest of the world to discover whether or not Israel is still making punitive strikes.

As for the Palestine refugees, it should be obvious that a solution could be found if there were a will by both sides — as well as by the American and Soviet governments — to resolve the problem.

In the present situation, we feel Israel should have our moral and political support, whatever views we might have about an ultimate solution. And we see no reason why the revulsion properly felt about Vietnam should prevent the Left from taking such a stand. Nor should the hope for socialism be taken as a license not to think.

W. P.

BOOKS

CHILDREN OF VIOLENCE

THE YEAR OF THE YOUNG REBELS. By Stephen Spender. Random House. \$4.95.

One evening in Paris in May, 1968, after a day spent at the Sorbonne, Stephen Spender confessed that he was tempted to ask each of his revolutionary interlocutors, "Young man, what do you really want?" The question may never have been articulated, it at least never appears in *The Year of the Young Rebels*—but it is implicit throughout, implicit in the image of this white-haired figure of great dignity, radicalized and disillusioned in the intellectuals' most significant political commitment of our century, confronting the new wave of revolutionary effervescence and attempting to understand the human processes it represents. It seems to me very important that there should have been an itinerant observer of the international student revolt of 1968, and that it should have been a man of the sensitivity, sympathy and style of Stephen Spender. *The Year of the Young Rebels* is not the comparative history of the 1968 scenes that we need—it contains too many important lacunae, and even failures of understanding, especially in its first, reportorial half—but it is an important and moving attempt at seeing and comprehending.

Spender sees acutely; his book is full of sharp recorded moments: the Gaullists in their automobiles klaxoning up the Champs Elysées after the General's speech on May 30: "the triumphant bacchanal of the Social World of Conspicuous Consumption, shameless, crowing, and more vulgar than any crowd I have seen on Broadway or in Chicago"; Sartre at the Sorbonne: "a warm heart and a cold brain" producing "answers of sliced logic"; the overwhelming present of Prague, where "the future offers nothing but the continuance of Now." There is a sense of quiet, undramatized, but committed *témoignage* to the place and time where history has reached a moment of convulsion. Spender is particularly good at rendering the existential meaning of freedom and the demand for freedom: "It would be a good thing if [freedom] were discussed more as something positively consumed like air or food, something the lack of which leaves a terrible void in life, and less as the intellectuals' luxury or the philosophers' theory." This in relation to Prague, where the students shouting "We want light!" were asking for electric light in their dormitories so that they could read books.

It is the Czech students who elicit Spender's greatest sympathy,

because their fight is for the most basic human freedoms. To a degree, the first half of *The Year of the Young Rebels* comes to be structured on a contrast between the Czech students' demand for real light and the Western students' denunciation of "bourgeois freedoms" as a fraud and a ruse. Spender is better equipped — we are all better equipped — to understand this classical form of revolt than the rebellion of post-affluent youth. The Czech students tend to make the Western students look unreal, their revolt a strange gratuitous pantomime, a play event or ludic exercise. Spender warns us that we do wrong both to ourselves and to the enslaved when we despise our bourgeois freedoms. But he is also aware that the less complicated, more immediate demand for freedom should not be used as a cudgel against the Western students, who face the complex of problems created by guaranteed affluence and formal freedom in a world where the individual imagination no longer has any leverage on the center of things, on the real determinants of the quality of one's life.

Yet Spender's East/West contrast does oversimplify, because there have been infinite shadings of authenticity and fraudulence in the world student revolt, and it is our compelling responsibility to determine and judge these shadings. I feel that Spender signally fails to do so in his chapter on Paris. He is mostly impressed by the romanticism of the French students, their surrealist appeal to the imagination as ultimate arbiter. What he does not see is that the French revolt was exemplary because it combined two revolutionary protests, the "Marcussian" demand for liberation and a simpler demand for freedom, the former directed to the revolutionary reconstruction of society, the latter to the immediate reform of the micro-society of the university. According to Lucien Goldmann, the French university originally had the function of training an elite formed by an authoritarian milieu (the French bourgeois family of the nineteenth century, and its image in the lycées) in the values of independent thought and leadership. But, Goldmann's argument continues, in an increasingly technological society where positions of true leadership and decision-making have diminished and there is a proliferation of roles of highly-trained executants of others' decisions, this university has come to teach students from a relatively free background (the modern petit-bourgeois family) the necessity to accept and to implement the ideas of others, to conform. To put it in another way: while in postwar France the gates of higher education have been opened to explosively increasing numbers of students, no theory or practice of mass education have been evolved. An outmoded bourgeois classical cultural ideal is still offered to the consumption of a theoretical elite, which is to be judged for its all-around cultural harmony. As a result, not only irrelevance but failure have been built into the system: only a small

elite of the elite (the mass of university students) will really ever be equipped with degrees that have meaning and subsequent positions that have value. Unlike the situation in American universities, which are clearly objectively, experientially, the freest enclaves of the society, life at the Sorbonne is the daily experience of unfreedom, of irrelevance, of a cynical Darwinism. Hence, if one part of the French student revolt was directed at the society of one-dimensionality — “We don’t want a world where the guarantee of not dying of hunger is traded against the guarantee of dying of boredom” — another part was directed to the instauration of a free and rational system of education.

Spender warns the students against destroying the university while they are trying to revolutionize society: the students’ base, the source of their intellectual weapons, must be preserved. But it is not at all certain that most of the French students were in any important sense destructive of the university. They assumed that the university was both necessary and indestructible, and also that a good part of it could be reformed only if destroyed. Unlike the American students, they were fighting an institution that directly, legally and ever so bureaucratically represents the State, and in which the State plays a directly oppressive role, decreeing each year how many students will be allowed to accede to the top distinctions, attempting to suppress certain student groups and to subsidize others, fixing salaries, hours and all the modalities of study and teaching. The students’ first call was for autonomy and self-governance of the universities; they were really asking, “Whose university?” If this inevitably led to a degree of political romanticism, it was because possession of the university, its mode of existence in society, could not really be analyzed without attention to those it served and those it excluded — there was and still is the irrefutable fact that less than ten percent of the university population is from the working classes, and the percentage of these that succeed is smaller still. Hence the gesture toward the workers, both futile and necessary, the attempt to bring the university “ghetto” into the real currents of society, which made inevitable the rehearsal of a general revolution. Hence too the explosion of talk observed by Spender, the need to create an accession to language for those whom culture had rendered silent, the call for a Cultural Revolution. The ludic element of the revolt, the surrealist poetry and games, was indeed a necessary step in the creation of a revolutionary community.

Spender is skeptical about claims that “more work was done” at Columbia and the Sorbonne during the weeks of the revolts than at any other time. Yet the claim may be justified for the Sorbonne, because for the first time in its modern history students and those faculty members who did not emigrate talked *about* their subjects, what these sub-

jects were and how one went about studying them, something virtually unknown in the French educational system. The celebrated phrase *L'imagination prend le pouvoir* did not mean only the Dada carnival of the Sorbonne courtyard; it meant also the work of the *commissions paritaires* in the various disciplines, groups which produced both utopian generalities and very concrete proposals for the reorganization of studies — to which Edgar Faure's reform, as far as it got, owed much. Here again, the French revolt seems to me exemplary: destruction and creation, dreaming and practicality, revolution and reformism met in the student soviets, in the spontaneous anarchist seizure of power within the factory of knowledge.

Spender is attentive to the importance of the anarchist model; he has an interesting discussion of Voline's anarchist account of the Russian Revolution, and some fine pages on the anarchist imagination. But I think he underestimates the real value of the imaginative anarchy which the French students, reviving their indigenous revolutionary tradition, brought to the problems of seizure of power and reconstruction of the university, the way in which they returned power and responsibility to those directly concerned. The students' anarchist model indeed proved temporarily exportable, to the factories where the strikes began outside the framework of the Marxist trade unions, with "spontaneous" organization at "the base." The anarchist model may in the future prove far more enduring a revolutionary ideal than the Marxist because it provides for a direct and immediate reordering of human social experience along with the reordering of economic structures. To ask the students to go beyond this model and present a "program" for a restructured technological society is, as Spender sees, absurd: such a society could only be seen in terms of what it was, of what exists. Cohn-Bendit is surely right when he talks of "lauching an experiment" that breaks with existing society and wins "a glimpse of a possibility," something that then vanishes, but has shown what the truly new could be.

To the anarchist imagination Spender effectively contrasts the cloistered virtue of George Kennan's and Raymond Aron's university, and the brave new technetronic totalitarianism of Zbigniew Brezezinski: the worlds of those who, if forced to choose, prefer order to social justice. In his critique of Kennan's *Democracy and the Student Left*, Spender has very pertinent things to say about the evasion of morality through the invocation of complexity, and the resimplification of complexity in war. If he convincingly renders the sense of freedom for the Czechs, Spender also masterfully records the experiential meaning of cynicism in the case of *Encounter* and the CIA. Against this sellout world of politics, the students are forced to wage what

Spender accurately calls "the politics of the non-political," the conversion of personal values into political counteraction. This he considers basically an extension of Romantic revolt: "Ever since the Industrial Revolution it has been impossible for the individual to envisage the organizational center of productivity as being the extension of the inner world of values that are at once personal and generally human." This is lucid, but it almost seems to assign to the protestors the same Luddite status that Brezezinski would give them. "The imagination has known for a hundred and fifty years what their revolt is about," Spender says of all the young rebels: but how do we move from imagination into politics?

When he is characterizing the expressions of the various student insurgents he encountered, Spender applies the adjective "hysterical" to the Americans; they are driven to it. This is clearly right, and the hysteria derives from their relatively greater sense of impotence, their sense that the supreme impossibility within American society is to provoke a response, any response, from an all-co-opting system — which may suggest why the ludic element in the American student revolt is primitivist in nature, aimed at the creation of a zero-degree sense of fellowship. Spender returns to his critique of the students for confusing extra- and intra-university issues, and for threatening to destroy their base camp, the university. But within the politics of hysteria, this confusion and this threat are probably indispensable, because the basis of the students' challenge to those within the university is the Forsterian plea of "Only connect." As Spender indeed admits at one point, "parietal" issues and political issues admit of no distinction because the students are trying to reconstruct public values and styles on the basis of intimately personal ones. Cohn-Bendit's harangues about "sexual alienation" are not silly: we should see where the Freudian and the Marxist senses of repression converge.

Spender in fact has a fine passage on the teaching of literature in the contemporary university, on the tendency to make of art and criticism autotelic activities sterilized and insulated from the views and experience from which they arose, and those amid which they live. This is to my mind precisely a major instance of where "connections" have broken down, where the university has defined the knowledge it transmits as unconnections (which at another level are in truth connected to an unavowed and even unconscious ideology). Our most persuasive modern theories of criticism suggest that the highest form of human activity is the disinterested contemplation of a fine aesthetic stasis in which every utterance, be it the negations of Ivan Karamazov or the apocalyptic affirmations of Rimbaud, meets its ironic counterpart

in an harmonious tension, a reconciliation of opposites. Such criticism defuses the most revolutionary images, dilutes them in a tepid liberal bath, a kind of pure humanistic tolerance which co-opts everything—even, now, the Beatles or Malcolm X—into “culture.” If fifty years ago T. S. Eliot’s “tradition” was a radical reinterpretation of our cultural situation, it has now been degraded into a set of sacred texts ritually expounded by the exegetical acolytes in a perfectly hermetic and uninterrupted Beckettian cultural monologue. No wonder that the first effort of the students should be directed toward eliciting a response, a connection, and that they sometimes seem willing to trade in their freedom to be rid of their sense of helplessness.

What makes things difficult, of course, is that many of the connections we are asked to make by students are trivial or worse, that we are so often asked simply to blow our minds. And also, the gentle Forsterian question in moments of crisis escalates into that flung at the liberals by the straightjacketed priest Jacques Roux at the end of *Marat/Sade*: “When will you learn to see/ When will you learn to take sides?” Spender knows well the force of this question from past experience. But he in effect counters it with the other question, Will you burn the British Museum before having written *Das Kapital*? We are all, I think, forced to this counterquestion in America, where the university is in many ways the best thing we have, and where the university is sincerely committed to quality mass education in a way that the rest of the educational system isn’t. Spender’s vision of the possible future is one of “the university as agora,” where the ivory tower of scholarship would stand side by side with the “ferro-concrete tower” of the activists. Yet the twin towers may suggest too much insulation, too little connection. Spender does not like the term “the critical university” because it suggests endless talk about whether any given discipline is worth teaching or not. But a true critical university should be the place for discovery of the real mediations among the personal, the cultural, the academic and the political. It should allow for disciplines to be taught and deconstructed at the same time, it should permit the cultural discourse to go on, but permit us to dislodge ourselves from our traditional place within that discourse. It should foster a *Verfremdungseffekt* within our cultural play, a sense of strangeness in relation to art and to our cultural assumptions which would foil the endless co-optations of degraded liberal humanism.

Peter Brooks

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*THE GERMAN NAVAL MUTINIES OF
WORLD WAR I. By Daniel Horn.
Rutgers. 350 pp. \$10.*

A handbook for revolutionaries or how to overthrow your officers and take over a navy. The 'Great' War circumstances were somewhat different than the Vietnam War — but not that different. The blundering, iron-minded officers; the poor food and living conditions; the endless war. Also included is a very real officer's rebellion against the central government. Somewhat familiar? All this comes from the German naval archives which were opened after the second 'Great' war and have been finally whipped into readable shape by Daniel Horn, associate professor of history at Rutgers. It's impossible to print a book today about how to directly overthrow the American military. But the techniques presented here are some of the closest indirect observations on present-day revolution that can be published. --Openings

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SEIZE THE DAY

SETTING FREE THE BEARS. By John Irving. Random House. \$5.95.

NOG. By Rudolph Wurlitzer. Random House. \$4.95.

SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE or The Children's Crusade. By Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. Delacorte Press. \$5.95.

GOING PLACES. By Leonard Michaels. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. \$4.95.

CONVERSATIONS WITH JORGE LUIS BORGES. Interviewer, Richard Burgin. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. \$3.95.

A PERSONAL ANTHOLOGY. By Jorge Luis Borges. Ed. by Anthony Kerrigan. Grove Press. \$1.95.

One of the ideas we have learned to live with during the past five years is that the young are not particularly interested in *our* history. That a student has never heard of Sacco and Vanzetti or Joe McCarthy, not to mention Daddy Warbucks, may not be shocking, but that he doesn't smart from his inadequacy has been hard for the grown-ups to take. Though my father never did more than delouse doughboys, I was impressed by the German helmet with its gold spike and sunburst of the Kaiser's Imperial Army that drifted around our attic during my childhood. I was eager to be taken in by the helmet along with an old record *Hunting the Hun* ("If you want to force them out, just put out a plate of old sauerkraut") so that it became my past too. And I'm sure that part of what we're saying when we go in for aggrieved statements like "kids today just don't care," is not only that they don't care for our values but they don't care for our experience—and that hurts.

The more thoughtful young do not assume that the past can be lightly disregarded: it can't be easy to throw away so much and depend completely upon today. In *Setting Free the Bears*, John Irving has as part of his scheme a careful reconstruction of the capitulation of Austria to the Nazis in 1938. This section, which he calls prehistory, is brilliant and belongs to the notebook of his Viennese hero, Siegfried Javotnik. Siggy complains that he was too young for the war, that at twenty-one in Austria he is "at an interim age in an interim time . . ."

I guess that if you're twenty-one in 1967, in America, you needn't glut yourself with pre-history; in America I understand that there are crusades every day. But I'm not in America. I'm in the Old World and what makes it old isn't that it's had a head start. Any place that's lagging, waiting again for the National Crisis—that's an Old World, and it's often a pity to be young in it.

A statement which contains a perilous nostalgia for times of war—but,

given the interim, Siggie and his friend Graff set out on a motorcycle to create their own crises. A plot evolves, a grand scheme equal to espionage, as intricate in its heroics as a feat of the French underground. Graff and Siggie are to set free the animals in the Hietzinger Zoo, an enormous escapade which they construct as a fantasy and come to plan and document as a reality. It is to be their history. Siggie, the instigator, the wild one, dies in a foolish escape sequence on his bike, leaving a heritage as compelling to his friend as the James Dean legend. He leaves, in fact, his Notebook, which constitutes a living autobiography, a superbly written, amusing, kitchen history of Eastern Europe from his conception in 1938 up until the Hungarian Revolution of 1956: his family squabbling over politics, correcting each other on dates and details, the events of *the* world woven into *their* world and present emotions.

Unfortunately, the Zoo watch sections, which depend too much on verbal dazzle, are boring, endless accounts of the habits of the animals at night, the schedule of O. Schrutt, their evil keeper, and a mawkish anthropomorphism. The zoo plot in Irving's novel is disappointing, reminiscent of Updike's mythology in *The Centaur*. It's a wonder that so talented a writer allows himself to spoil good work with such a heavy apparatus. *Setting Free the Bears* is like a good drawing obfuscated to come up to some notion of Art. Dickens devoted very little time to Silas Wegg and his dust heap in *Our Mutual Friend*, but the modicum of fable within the novel is perfect.

John Irving takes a conservative position for a young man in his first novel: the wild animals let loose on Vienna do not pay back society for the ills of the past. Revolutionary acts like self-made plots are fictional and unsatisfactory. Irving insists that the young should not read history as high romance—that they must deal sensibly with their own time and incur their own debts.

Nog by Rudolf Wurlitzer is a remarkable attempt to obliterate *any* past whatsoever. A narrator juggles a few memories which may or may not be fictional—that hardly matters. What does matter is that the memories are set pieces which can elicit only a safe and stock response. "No connections . . . Narrow all possibilities. Develop and love your limitations. No one knows you. Know no one." This is an extremely sophisticated voice, quibbling with and controlling his memories—very much like Roquentin in Sartre's *Nausea* who tells us:

Now I think of no one any more. I don't even bother looking for words. It flows in me, more or less quickly. I fix nothing, I let it go. Through the lack of attaching myself to words, my thoughts remain nebulous most of the time. They sketch vague, pleasant shapes and then are swallowed up. I forget them almost immediately.

And like Sartre, Wurlitzer is trying to find in the novel a mode for his ideas. The book is highly intellectual; its confusions are carefully written and deliberate. It is a record of a state of mind—of a world supposedly timeless without history or responsibility, a world that Wurlitzer, for all his skill, cannot sustain even within the pages of a short novel. Time does become apparent, events sequential. From the moment the nameless hero calls himself “Nog” and falls in with Meredith and Lockett he is involved in their Bonnie and Clyde arrangements and, when Lockett dies, Meredith forces him to fulfill Lockett’s role in their “plan.” Utterly passive, save for the invention of fantasies that protect him from reality, Nog thinks: “I am helpless before a plan. She must know that. I am so tired. I might as well embrace the plan. I will anyway.” The plan involves boarding a mysterious freighter headed for the Panama Canal with a doctor’s bag full of drugs. Their mission on board seems rather pointless, though they administer drugs to the one fellow passenger, an old Tennessee Williams crone, her cabin complete with brass bed, potted ferns, orange cat on yellow chaise lounge. Wurlitzer is versatile. He can go from a Western set to Haight Ashbury to a California beach party with complete accuracy, but he never stays long—the withdrawal is always to preserve the narrator’s lack of involvement and personality. Especially toward the end some of the events of *Nog* seem melodramatic and arbitrary, though one can appreciate Wurlitzer’s intention to keep the novel open-ended, with the hero drifting into new visions of old incidents.

One of the best maneuvers in *Nog* is the transferral of names from one character to another, not because they are interchangeable—they are not—but because they would like to play another role in fantasy. The narrator calls himself Nog (after a wandering Finn he’s run across in Oregon) only when Meredith first asks his name. Until this time the name has been given to an elusive being (perhaps real) and is used by Lockett before his death as though it had some magic powers. And Meredith accuses the narrator: “You killed Lockett. You wanted to be Lockett and when he abandoned you on the ledge you had him killed.” Finally she has the man we have come to know as Nog tattooed on the ass with the name Lockett, but the inventions of the mind can play havoc even with the indelible. At the end this man recalls his first meeting with Meredith:

I first met Meredith over a jar of artichoke hearts. But it’s Lockett now . . . Lockett’s hands moved easily over the frozen-meat packages, slipping them into his army overcoat. We discovered each other stealing.

Like counters in a dream Lockett then nudges out even the mythical Nog, and the narrator says, "I have no memories except for Lockett. He's coming on. Nog has been cancelled."

Nog is in a recognizable tradition of self-conscious literary modernism. The narrator is in accord with the gentleman in Beckett's *Watt* who notes a tiny slip, a change in his universe:

To conclude from this that the incident was intentional would, I think, be rash. For my—how shall I say?—my personal system was so distended at the period of which I speak that the distinction between what was inside it and what was outside it was not at all easy to draw.

The real strength of Wurlitzer's novel lies not so much in its intellectual fashion as in its complete and honest treatment of the Hip world. It is *all* there, never with the false gusto of *The Village Voice*, but with understanding and tenderness—the communal living with its touching middle-class laundry problems, the ritualized sex, the lost cool of tough old Meredith, "I'm sick of not having a decent change of underwear, of dirty fingernails, of fucking in the sand, of eating out of cans, of not having enough make-up, or irregular hours." A hard life, God knows. The battle for a freedom from the past in *Nog* is equally hard and defeating in the end.

Recently, a silly article in *The New York Times*, "Young Writers Say They Don't Read," trundled out Kurt Vonnegut again as the one exception. "Vonnegut is one writer who's on the beam. He writes cinematically—charting themes through time, literarizing jump-cut techniques and split-screen effects." Cinematically! There can be no higher praise. The enchantment of having found a writer who can be talked about in this stylish way makes the young forget, if they ever knew, that D. W. Griffiths perfected the split-screen, that Faulkner can be read for montage or Fitzgerald for a wipe. They are happy with their discoveries: one of the young writers who doesn't read (James Kunen, participant in the Columbia riots and author of *The Strawberry Statement*) admits, "It's just easier to go to a movie and let it all wash over you." Vonnegut he likes. *Mother Night* in particular: "It very strongly stresses the bluriness of good and evil and the gratuitousness of how things come about."

Kurt Vonnegut's new novel may not be as satisfying to his young audience as the other novel he has written for them so often. It is, to begin with, a much better book. He wants to tell his history as a prisoner of war, during which he witnessed the firebombing of Dresden, one doomsday in our apocalyptic time. *Slaughterhouse-Five* has a slight autobiographical frame for the story of Billy Pilgrim, prisoner of war, witness to the firebombing of Dresden, but there the identification ends,

Billy is a Vonnegut hero—a vaguely dissatisfied dupe in a flabby society. Though he is a blank and stupid man, his humanity has survived not only the holocaust but American life. He drives a Cadillac El Dorado Coupe de Ville. A successful optometrist, he is a past president of the Lions Club, but he has a curious mental history (nervous breakdowns, battle shock) and has come “unstuck in time”:

He has walked through a door in 1955 and come out another in 1941. He has gone back through that door to find himself in 1953. He has seen his birth and death many times, he says, and pays random visits to all events in between.

The novel is not *limited* to the massacre of Dresden, but can travel through Billy's empty marriage, and the milieu of the American businessman which Vonnegut does easily and well, to the planet of Tralfamadore. The device is so literal; it is fancy doing the work of imagination. Imagine, if you will—this simple modern day holy fool, Billy Pilgrim, set in a cage where the little Tralfamadorians observe him performing his quaint earthling functions. But I prefer not to: for me Dresden is fantastic enough: the science fiction should have been left on the cutting room floor.

The story of Dresden is magnificently told, as perfectly written as any re-creation of the horrors of war, subtle about history, impassioned about the fate of individuals. Why didn't Vonnegut deal with it directly instead of using it as an overlay for one of his ordinary pieces of science fiction? And the ordinary Vonnegut is so much like H. G. Wells of such mildly fanciful novels like *The History of Mister Polly* or *Christina Alberta's Father*. Billy Pilgrim, exactly like Wells' heroes, is a modest widower; while he has no argument with the world despite its run-down morals and emotional vacuity, he is able to invent a world which is patently preferable.

I don't really care to be amused by Billy as an earthling or Billy's Babbity—that is such an easy mark—but Billy Pilgrim as a prisoner of war was worth a whole book. The citizens of Dresden watch the American prisoners march into town in the makeshift costumes that protect them from the winter cold:

And then they saw bearded Billy Pilgrim in his blue toga and silver shoes, with his hands in a muff. He looked at least sixty years old. Next to Billy was little Paul Lazarro with a broken arm. He was fizzing with rabies. Next to Lazzaro was the poor old high school teacher, Edgar Derby, mournfully pregnant with patriotism and middle age and imaginary wisdom. And so it goes.

The eight ridiculous Dresdeners ascertained that these hundred ridic-

ulous creatures really *were* American fighting men fresh from the front. They smiled, and then they laughed. Their terror evaporated. There was nothing to be afraid of. Here were more crippled human being, more fools like themselves. Here was light opera.

Or Billy's memory of coming out of a meat locker the day after Dresden was destroyed:

The sun was an angry little pinhead. Dresden was like the moon now, nothing but minerals. The stones were hot. Everybody else in the neighborhood was dead.
So it goes.

American fighter planes came in under the smoke to see if anything was moving. They saw Billy and the rest moving down there. The planes sprayed them with machine-gun bullets, but the bullets missed. Then they saw some other people moving down by the river-side and they shot at them. They hit some of them. So it goes.

The idea was to hasten the end of the war.

"So it goes," is the refrain in *Slaughterhouse-Five*, and though it grows weak with familiarity like the wry "Good Night, Chet" after the last ironic bit of seven o'clock news, I don't presume that Vonnegut means to draw a moral blank. The subtitle of the novel is "The Children's Crusade" for he wants to impress upon us a retrospective view of the follies of war. I hope that James Kunen, participant in the Columbia riots, if he's still reading at all, will discover that there was nothing haphazard about Dresden. He claims though to have been so committed to *Lord Jim* when the cops came into the building he was occupying that he did not jump out the window with one hundred and twenty-seven students but went right on reading, not bravely but gratuitously. So it goes.

Leonard Michaels' collection of short stories, *Going Places*, is a remarkable first book with a strong sense of style. Though the range is wide, Michaels' mark is on all of his stories from a rather weightless tale of obsessive jealousy of one college roommate for another ("Finn") to a brutal prothalamion ("Crossbones") and the fable ("Isaac") steeped in a yiddish idiom. The distinctive quality of all the stories is an interplay of reality and fantasy. Scenes wash out from tangible places (room, street, subway) to a psychic landscape. Thoughts of hostility and anger transfer to actuality—not the mere expressed intention "I wanted to jump out the window," but the jump taken, the wild crash of the emotions executed in a verbal reality. One might say that Michaels uses metaphor where we are conditioned to simile.

Beyond the room, our sobs, and her breaking, retrogressive voice, I heard church bells. I squeezed her hands, shook my head and staggered from the couch to a window. Glass broke, I fainted and minutes later I awoke on a porch just below the window.

For me the least successful stories, those that seem slight, depend on a conscious experimentation in which the words and images cannot support the large effects of sexual violence or nightmare fears. "Her crinoline broke under us like cinders." "I smeared her against the floor, got up and smeared her against a wall." His dehumanized people do not pull off their scenes of horror:

She cried. I made fists and pummeled my head. She cried. I pummeled until my head slipped into my neck. She stopped crying. I smashed my mouth with my knee. She smiled a little.

Their encounters are overly abstract and arty. Directness is all: like a group marathon, some of the stories in *Going Places* seem to substitute hysteria for insight, to cry for results that will be depthless as the false bottom of a conjurer's box.

It is notable, though, that with all the sense of innovation in *Going Places* the stories that really work *do* have characters with histories, not lengthy curriculum vitae to place them for us but essentials—they are Jews, shiksas, college graduates or Puerto Rican toughs. Take Sarah Nilsin and Myron Bronsky from the story "Crossbones":

Sarah had Myron Bronsky, gloomy brown eyes, a guitar in his hands as mystical and tearing as, say, Lorca, though Myron's particular hands derived from dancing, clapping Hasidim; and he had Sarah Nilsin, Minnesota blonde, long bones, arctic schizophrenia in the grey infinities of her eyes, and a turn for lyric poems derived from piratical saga masters.

And the end of their short impressive story is Leonard Michaels at his best:

. . . Sarah slammed and smeared the iron down the board as if increasingly sealed in the momentum of brute work . . . Myron was whispering as if to himself that she must hurry and she was turning from the board and in the same motion hurled the iron, lunging after it with nails and teeth before it exploded against the wall and Myron, instantly, hideously understood that the iron, had it struck him, had to burn his flesh and break his bones . . . and they were strapped in bandages, twisted and stiff with pain a week after Sarah's father didn't arrive and they helped one another walk slowly up the steps of the municipal building to buy a marriage license.

"I think of reading a book as no less an experience than traveling or falling in love," says Borges in *Conversations With Jorge Luis Borges*. To read him is to know that books have been the central influence which informed his life and art. It's odd then, that given his quirky, dated erudition, he should so appeal to a very young man, Richard Burgin, who interviewed him for those *Conversations* while still an undergradute at Brandeis. It is to Burgin's credit that this book is so charming, so full of his warm admiration for a literary idol. The interviewer has done his homework, but done it with enthusiasm, and it's no small accomplishment to direct the right questions to a man who has been reading in several languages all his life and who has pieced together from various sources a highly personal metaphysics. Burgin holds his own with Borges: some of the nicest interchanges in the book are those in which the master learns from his student.

What we learn from *Conversations With Borges*, as well as from the new selection of his works, *A Personal Anthology*, is that the past can be constantly revitalized by genius. History, whether it's the fall of nations or family memoirs, is fresh and meaningful if we bring our own energy to its examination. Ultimately all is useful to Borges. No event or personality, however staggering (Hiroshima or Hitler), subdues his imagination, which doesn't mean simply that everything is grist for his mill but that he can look at the most rigidly interpreted facts of history with a fresh eye. In the same way literature for him is never canonized; it is always open to new response. He is interested in possibilities and paradox: where others have accepted or rejected Christ, Borges can consider that

Perhaps some feature of the Crucified Face lurks in every mirror; perhaps the Face died, was effaced, so that God might become everyone.

Who knows whether we may not see it tonight in the labyrinths of dreams and remember nothing tomorrow.

In "The Modesty of History" Borges uncovers small incidents from the remote literary past which seem to him to have much more authenticity than the "historic" dates fabricated by governments and journalism. Those of the hordes under thirty who want to throw off the past are guilty, unlike Borges, of an old man's rigidity. They have been subject to more made-up events than any previous generation and have perhaps taken them too seriously. I think they have confused the whole despicable process of "history in the making" (special issues of *Life*, TV pomposity, Nixon: "This has got to be the most historic telephone call ever made

by a President") with real history and the excitement of self-discovery through the past. Jorge Luis Borges, however, has been in favor these past few years with the supposedly small body of literate youth. Those who read and honor him will be deeply moved by these lines from a blind old man of letters:

*Within my darkness I slowly explore
The hollow half light with hesitant cane,
I who always imagined Paradise
To be a sort of library.*

Maureen Howard

Jerzy Grotowski

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THE SOFT MIDDLE

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MAN OF LETTERS. By John Gross.
Macmillan. \$8.95.

What could be more satisfying to writers than writing about writers who write about writers? And John Gross's book, which traces the fate of "the man of letters" from the days of the *Edinburgh Review* down close to our own time, has, not surprisingly, evoked some exceptionally long and most delighted reviews. Despite Gross's liberal concessions that the man of letters occupies a rapidly shrinking space in the intellectual world, both he and his reviewers seem to assume that the shrinking is an extremely important and unhappy phenomenon. Yet to anyone but the professional writer about writers it's probably much too late to take his fate very seriously. It's difficult to escape the inference that writing about writing about writing is little more than an act of self-justification by indirection.

Gross, however, carefully adopts a voice and a strategy that ostensibly keeps him out of the trap of self-preoccupation and indulgence. If there is one word which Gross would like most to have used to describe his book, it is probably "judicious," a word freely used by the reviewers to define Gross's virtues as the historian of his profession. His is the voice of liberal sanity, indulging no enthusiasms and rejecting intolerance of anything but intolerance itself. And his book is, therefore, one which makes very few explicit claims. Its characteristic movement is to set up a balance sheet of virtues and defects in the writers it treats and to weigh both sides of every problem it touches upon. Early on Gross says, "It is hard for the reader not to feel in two minds about the reviews." And the book remains consistently two-minded. But two-minded at the expense of complexity; two-minded in a prose of apparently exemplary clarity and assuredness.

And yet there is something askew in the narrative. The voice of lucid, patient objectivity is nonetheless a *voice* — with energies of its own, responding to pressures that come from somewhere off the balance sheets, and occasionally threatening to become imbalanced. After a while — after Carlyle is revalued, Frederic Harrison redeemed from the counterassaults of Matthew Arnold (himself impressively though judiciously valued and undiminished), after Saintsbury and Chesterton are resurrected in a carefully qualified way — after all this and more, the balance sheets — despite their clarity — become a bit irksome. The unrelenting brief summaries of careers and qualities, turning always on some sort of "but," which indicates that the virtues are diminished by vices, the vices redeemed by virtues, become a little too much like ritual.

The impressiveness of Gross's having read all that stuff and having encapsulated it so reasonably begins to wear, and it becomes necessary to consider where all this material is going or — perhaps more precisely — where it is coming from. Why this preoccupation with fairness and justice to second-line talents?

The clues have been there in the very judiciousness of the writing from the earliest pages and in the implicit melancholy of the terse foreword, which notes the diminishing of value implicit in the phrase "man of letters" since the early nineteenth century, and the "disintegration" of nineteenth-century literary culture. The judiciousness is sustained by a fragile sense of loss which pervades the whole book. The discussions of writers seem to get more and more gossipy and increasingly like capsules with some exceptions to be noted) as we approach our own time. This is partly, I suppose, because so many of the later writers are less interesting than Jeffrey, Carlyle, Thackeray and Arnold. Which either justifies the melancholy or suggests a false principle of selection.

Gross's judicious manner is a cross between Arnoldian urbanity (with all the complications implicit in Arnold's profound and unequivocal feelings about his own culture) and the pseudo-scientism of the academic dissertation (a quality which Gross implicitly rejects with some energy). He has a subject which might have made an ambitious dissertation and he brings to it a range of reading which very few Ph.D. candidates are likely to be able to match. But he writes in a voice which is almost a self-conscious rejection of the academic world and of its almost inevitable barbarisms: no footnotes (or, at least, no pedantic ones), no pompous circumlocutions or objectivities. However it equivocates about the values of the academy, this book is undeniably antiacademic. For the academic study of literature makes it a professional, specialist activity and withdraws it from the world of humane generalities and common culture and ordinary readers in which it seemed to live—in however qualified the mode—in the days when the *Edinburgh Review* gained its popularity. (The dust jacket reminds us that Gross is not affiliated with any academy.)

But it is also antiantacademic. In the world as it is now constructed, the academy is the only place in which literary traditions are institutionally protected. The academy is a refuge, not only for the study of literature but for poets and men of letters, for writers whose activities the world no longer seems particularly interested in supporting. And there is an implicit and largely reasonable argument that it is absurd for people within the academies to be taking antiacademic stands while being paid by the academies for doing so. The sane liberal tradition, which it is increasingly evident that Gross stands for, finds that kind of activity neither sane nor liberal.

Gross is nothing if not practical. He speaks for the tough-minded rationalist liberal, who understands what the conditions of contemporary society entail, and who is impatient with radical and "modish" critics of the movement of Western Culture which has, in some way, been responsible for the "fall" of the man of letters. "There is a bad, false tradition," he says early in the book, "which has grown up among literary men, of assuming that it is permissible to measure a culture in terms of, say, advertisements but not of anesthetics." Let's not fool ourselves, Gross seems to be arguing; much of the ugliness of contemporary civilization (and who would deny that it is ugly) is compensated for by crucial developments in medicine and technology which make life easier. (Later, Gross refuses to discuss the Leavis—Snow controversy, centering on this point, because of the "way in which that particular controversy was conducted," although he is willing to accept the idea of the existence of two cultures—not necessarily antagonistic but unrelated.)

The implication of this liberalism is that what is strictly literary, within institutions or out, tends to be limited and flawed. Gross is quick to detect and criticize those passages in which his subjects begin talking about culture as though it were a "flawed work of art." The men of letters in the early part of the tradition that he records are cultural critics as well as literary, writers who recognize and dwell on the continuity between art and culture and society. Carlyle, Arnold, Jeffrey, Harrison, Leslie Stephen, even Lewes and Bagehot and Hutton, were all writers who could not be satisfied with explication of texts. Writers need something more than texts and literary traditions if they are to say important things. The point is clearly made in a comment on T. S. Eliot's mode of criticism as juxtaposed against that of an obviously inferior writer like Augustine Birrell (the book brings us to this). Birrell is seen as a last feeble gasp of a tradition which insists on reading literature in terms of social and political movements. At one point Gross quotes him as saying of Marvell that "of all public men then living [he was] the one most deeply imbued with the spirit of our free constitution—its checks and balances jumped with his humour." Gross then goes on:

In Eliot, needless to say, there is nothing about free constitutions. Why should there be, indeed? His purposes are his own: he sets out to define the qualities of Marvell's best poetry more precisely than any previous commentator had done, and to exhibit them as the product of "European, that is to say, Latin culture." The result is a brilliant essay in reinterpretation, one of the classics of modern criticism. But as the hundred-thousandth undergraduate faithfully transcribes the familiar phrases about tough reasonableness and slight lyric grace, let us at least acknowledge that for the mass of ordinary readers (I don't mean scholars) there are losses to be set against the gains; that in supplying a valuable new historical perspective, Eliot helped to destroy a far from contemptible old one.

The prose and the attitudes here are characteristic of the entire book. There is the judiciousness, the careful balancing, the rejection of enthusiasms, the refusal to reject either alternative, no matter how feebly embodied (as in Birrell) and the deep commitment to cultural history which is more than literary—the province of the early reviewers.

The balance is supported here by an implicit conception of the “ordinary reader” which is peculiarly English. It would be hard to locate in America a body of ordinary readers which would be able to make the distinction between the kinds of histories Gross is talking about. The ordinary reader of that kind would be very special, indeed, probably self-consciously a part of an intellectual minority, whether attached to an academy or not. Gross surely has the “ordinary reader” in mind as he proceeds in his history of the “fall” of the man of letters; the loss entailed in that fall is largely the ordinary reader’s loss. If he exists, I wonder if he feels it? But surely in England he did once exist. For whom else did all those popular literary histories get written? Who else attended the adult schools that became a mark of Victorian education? Surely it was his money that lined the pockets of the literary journalists Gross describes in later chapters. But the existence of this kind of reading public is more a sociological than a literary phenomenon. And it is more likely that the disappearance of the kind of critical writing which would appeal to this public is more a function of technology than of the behavior of the writers with whom Gross deals.

The professionalism of academia, as it admitted English literature into its curriculum, made standards of scholarship more rigorous and eventually led to the incorporation and institutionalization of New Criticism. Such criticism tended to ignore literature’s larger and more obvious relations to life and culture in favor of the text. But one of the difficulties of Gross’s method in handling this development is that, although he is aware that the changes followed large scale cultural and technological changes, his focus on particular writers (quite reasonably taken as representative or influential) gives the impression that this movement was the responsibility of a few key writers.

This, in turn, leads to a positive need for judiciousness of the kind I have been describing, since it is obvious that no single writer or group of writers is to be blamed (“blame” may be an injudicious word and an inexact description of Gross’s activity). At any rate, the book takes great pains to show that, on the one hand, the Belle-Letttrists were not simply absurd and shallow, and that, on the other, the professional academicians—becoming increasingly professional—were also involved in a Good Thing despite their cold efficiency. “Blame” is, indeed, hard to fasten.

But the balance of the judgments reminds us again that the perspec-

tive Gross assumes toward his subject comes somewhere out of a middle whose existence, one inescapably infers, is urgently important. It values the "ordinary reader," though it remains wiser than he. It is full of sympathy with rigor; equally so with casualness. The disappearance of the ordinary reader (and writer) is necessarily seen as a loss. Who else could be expected to read literature with no vested interest, with no professional bias, but simply because literature is fun or personally, humanly, valuable? Who, in particular, more needs the sagacity of the man of letters to guide, to lead, to erect standards or to let them down?

As I have already suggested, however, the existence of the ordinary reader depends on economic structures over which literature itself has no control. Only aristocrats, in the past, could have afforded to be ordinary readers. In the nineteenth century, for a few years, many of the middle class—moving from commercialism in the direction of Mann's sensitive Hanno in *Buddenbrooks*—seemed to be "ordinary." But as *Buddenbrooks* suggests, the movement toward leisure and sensibility also implies a movement out of the middle world. Hanno is refined out of existence, and what he stands for is not simply a negation of the life of his fathers, but a new, aesthetic aristocracy, too sensitive to survive in the world of capitalism.

One of Gross's favorites, George Gissing, implies a similar, if only slightly less aesthetic turn from the center. Again, with typical judiciousness, Gross is implicitly critical of Gissing's refusal to entertain the possibility that education can produce "lovers of poetry." They are, on Gross's reading of Gissing, born, not made. But Gross is nevertheless sympathetic to Gissing's toughness of standards:

Much of the finest modern criticism, after all, says by implication what Gissing rather tactlessly spells out: that there can be no half-measures or middlebrow compromises, that in literature *Le mieux est l'ennemi du bien*. And this is perfectly fair. A critic's first duty is to stick by the standards he believes in, and he must be allowed the right, on paper, to banish anyone who falls short of them to outer darkness. But what teacher, faced with the flesh and blood actualities of the classroom, could afford to do the same, or would want to.

(Could it be that those flesh and blood actualities are the ordinary reader resurrected? Gissing eschews the middle and will not imagine literary standards to be determined by the classroom. His last work—*The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*—represents an opting out of the battle to create or impose standards and a retreat from the values of the ordinary into an aesthetic aristocracy. By implication, the insistence on an overriding concern for value in literature will lead to a divorce from society such as Gissing's or to a professionalizing of the literary pursuit

which inevitably will cut it off from the ordinary man. (There is, by the way, one "teacher" discussed in the book who, by implication, treats the flesh and blood actualities of the classroom as Gross suggests no teacher should want to—F. R. Leavis.)

Gross is aware of the implications of standards, their danger to the ordinary man, and their necessity for serious critics. But as with so much else in this book, he grants their importance in a context that implies melancholy necessity. Still, some necessities are less necessary than others, and if there is a villain of the piece (Gross will not explicitly allow any), it is Leavis. The forebodings of Leavis's role are clear enough in the summary of Desmond MacCarthy's position in English letters:

MacCarthy was not a strikingly original critic, nor even, in himself, a particularly important one. His importance was simply that of someone who helped to keep alive a tradition of breadth, enlightenment, rational sociability, civilized forbearance . . . it is not a tradition which was entirely superseded, even in the baton-swinging 1930's—though no doubt we should all be much more rigorous and exacting today if it had been. Those of us, that is, who survived to tell the story.

The animus against unqualified rigor is clear. And had Gross attempted to find a language more likely to antagonize Leavis (it is hard to imagine he didn't have Leavis in mind), he couldn't have done better. Rigor as opposed to "rational sociability and civilized forbearance!" One can hardly doubt where Leavis would stand if these were the options (see his remarks about David Cecil or C. S. Lewis); there can be equally little doubt about where Gross stands. The rhetoric is still largely that of the judicious man who sees and values both alternatives, but the balance is shaking. It shakes particularly in light of the way in which the very prose is intended to manifest those qualities of "rational sociability and civilized forbearance" it is describing.

Understandably, Leavis gets a more extended (and perhaps less sociable) treatment than any other writer. In discussing him Gross's rhetoric acquires its most intensely negative energy. The habit of judiciousness remains, but it seems only a habit. Certainly it does insufficient justice to Leavis' attempt (I do not say achievement) to bridge the gap between rigor and the general experience of the culture with which Gross is himself concerned. There may be, Gross says, some virtue in the Leavite insistence on criticizing popular culture, but the all-inclusiveness of the rhetoric of the early pages of Leavis and Thompson's *Culture and Environment* points toward

a state of mind in which only those in the 'classroom' are regarded as having any chance of salvation—a classroom where increasingly only one subject is taught, and there is only one teacher.

I don't wish to argue Gross's reading of Leavis, or to minimize the justice of the by now fatiguingly familiar criticism of Leavisian excess. But Leavis represents a kind of intensity with which this book is quietly—and judiciously—at war. Leavis is a prophet who must make us all uncomfortable, and unquestionably Victorian prophecy in the twentieth century can seem merely illiberal and arrogant. But the (judiciously qualified) attack on Leavis makes it evident that this book is a defense of the liberal tradition; it becomes a model of and a quiet polemic for a perhaps saner, certainly more obviously rational and pragmatic view than Leavis': once again, "a tradition of breadth, enlightenment, rational sociability, civilized forbearance."

The defense of this by now old and—in America at least—partially discredited liberal tradition could not have been managed in a treatment of more obviously "creative" writers, writers whose implicit discomfort with the traditions of nineteenth- and twentieth-century culture is more intense and radical than that of the literary intelligentsia. It is easier to deal with Middleton Murry than with D. H. Lawrence, with Eliot the critic than with Eliot the poet, with Chesterton than with Conrad. Carlyle does figure prominently in the opening pages, and Gross's discussion of him seems both intelligent and just. But Carlyle can be forgiven his excesses partly because they grew out of a deep humanity

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(where did Leavis' come from?), out of what George Eliot is quoted as calling a "beautiful human nature," partly because he is only the beginning of that antiliberal tradition which culminates in this volume with Leavis (the hero as the man of letters?).

I don't mean to undervalue the judiciousness or to minimize the worth of Gross's usual resistance to the oversimplifications of which he accuses Leavis. The problems are not at all simple, and neither Leavisian rigor nor Ryecroftian retreat is an available option for our descendants of the men of letters in the academy, or for the ordinary reader, wherever he is. Surely academia does perpetuate some of the very worst aspects of English studies, and surely, too, there is something profoundly narrow-minded in a tradition which rejects technology and modern communications unequivocally with no serious consideration of what technology has been able to do in the lessening of human suffering.

But Gross's discomfort with the way things are is manifest, especially in the "Epilogue." He resists all the new modes which seem to him to be a real threat to the humane Arnoldian tradition his judiciousness is defending. McLuhan and Leslie Fiedler strike him as "bandwagon" riders who are fundamentally antiliterary: "Apocalyptic fashions come and go," he says, "especially fashions which draw their main strength from that most wasting of all assets, Youth." Youth, modern radicalism, contemporary antirationalism (extensions, one might infer, of Leavisian antiliberalism) are the enemies of judiciousness. Apocalyptic writers are complicit in the social changes that have eroded the position of the man of letters—of letters themselves—in modern society. Academia professionally dessicates literature; antiacademic academics like Fiedler work out of protected positions to further divert literature and its values from the ordinary man. And where is there now a place for the man who resists co-optation into academia yet maintains standards, who perpetuates the tradition of civilized forbearance which even academia no longer sanctions in an unqualified way, who persists in reading literature and valuing it by virtue of "a commitment to the life which lies beyond literature."

Surely, the narrative voice, which Gross finds in this book, speaks for precisely such a man, a man who has found a place outside academia and outside radicalism. Its judiciousness should demonstrate that there is a place for the man of letters, sanely aware of the limits of his activities and of his competence, refusing to make claims beyond what liberal pragmatism and rationality will allow. One ought to be grateful for such a voice, even if it comes through discussion in brief of dozens of disparate and not compellingly fascinating careers. In part, I feel the gratitude it ought to inspire. But it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that

the style and the voice really are now inadequate, that the greatest and most valuable and living criticism, from Carlyle through Arnold and Lawrence and Leavis, was written in a very different mode, out of different values. The energy behind this book is an energy in defense of the lesser folk who need judiciousness in the absence of more intense and dangerous and creative energies.

Inevitably then, this book does seem to be about itself, about the possibility and the value of its being written at all. The rhetorical strategies ultimately fail to avoid the trap of self-indulgence that writing about writing about writing forces, and judiciousness—whose apparent virtue is an alertness to complexity which will help avoid simplification—becomes another device of simplification.

George Levine

POWER AMERICAN STYLE

AMERICAN POWER AND THE NEW MANDARINS. By Noam Chomsky. Pantheon. \$7.95.

AMERICAN IMPERIALISM: A SPECULATIVE ESSAY. By Ernest R. May. Atheneum. \$5.95.

A NEW FOREIGN POLICY FOR THE UNITED STATES. By Hans J. Morgenthau. Praeger. \$6.95.

Now that opposition to the Vietnam debacle has become popular, it is easy enough to forget that Noam Chomsky and Hans Morgenthau spoke out long before most of their university colleagues had the will or the wit to stop parroting stale rationalizations and face up to the tragic errors of American policy. Academic intellectuals, no different from others in that respect, are now busily engaged in acts of selective recollection, in persuading themselves after the fact how really discerning and courageous they were between 1965 and 1968. Most of us have played that game; only a few, like Chomsky and Morgenthau, have had little need for it.

One approaches their recent work, therefore, with respect and sympathy. Chomsky's book is made up mainly of essays already published, among them "The Logic of Withdrawal" and "On Resistance" which attracted so much attention when they first appeared. The argument for withdrawal from Vietnam was cogent in 1967. It is all the more compelling at present, whether in terms of the "national interest" defined in cold-blooded military terms or of the morality of American intervention. On the other hand, "On Resistance" is an uncomfortable piece

to read today. When it appeared, it had all the immediacy of a painfully honest inquest into the limits of personal responsibility and posed very real dilemmas of decision. Two years later, reprinted handsomely by Pantheon, it is flat, concerned with questions more and more young men have answered for themselves, in some ways an act of self-indulgence. Ernest Bevin, not my favorite British politician, once declared (in 1935) that he was tired of pacifist George Lansbury carting his conscience around the Labour Movement, asking what to do with it. I have something of the same feeling on rereading "On Resistance" in 1969.

Perhaps that reaction stems from my irritation with two long essays entitled "Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship" and "The Revolutionary Pacifism of A. J. Muste" where Chomsky uses his materials and presses his analysis in quite the same fashion he finds so troubling in those he criticizes. Who are the "liberal" scholars—the bad guys whom we are to distinguish, I suppose, from the "radical" good guys—about whom he generalizes so easily? Hans Morgenthau, Robert Scalapino, John Fairbank or Richard Leopold? Their outlooks and their interpretations vary so widely that it isn't particularly useful to categorize them—with whatever demurrers—in neat packages. Ernest May, for example, refers in *American Imperialism* to various explanations of the American turn to colonial expansionism in 1898-9. Aside from assessments stressing Providence, a "westward trend," or the inherent nature of capitalism, he identifies four major evaluations each stressing a different factor. All four are by historians—Julius Pratt, Frederick Merk, Walter La Feber, and Richard Hofstadter—who with not too much straining of the definitions can be identified with "liberal" scholarship. Which of them, then, is representative? And to use, as Chomsky does, Gabriel Jackson's *The Spanish Republic and the Civil War* as a microcosm of "liberal scholarship" (in the essay on "Objectivity") is to display all the predisposition for warped selectivity Chomsky damns (with interminable footnotes) in the people he attacks. Since he makes a great point of Jackson's disregard of certain materials and his overemphasis on those who reflect a commitment in favor of liberal democracy, it is all the more disturbing that Chomsky loads the dice at least as much as Jackson. Also, his description of the accomplishments of the anarcho-syndicalists, leaning heavily as it does on such works as Broué and Témime's *La Révolution et la guerre d'Espagne* or Rudolf Rocker's *The Tragedy of Spain*, is an exaggeration (here again I show my liberal bias), however one may feel about the movement itself, quite as obvious as any to be found among the liberals. Few of them, of course, have any greater illusions about the role of the Communist party and

the weakness of the politicians they made use of in Spain than does Chomsky.

Similarly, Chomsky's discussion of American and Japanese Pacific policy before 1941 in the *Muste* piece is almost breathtakingly oversimplified. With his main thrust I have no quarrel. Indeed, his ingenious comparison of the Japanese in Manchuria and the Americans in Vietnam is chillingly appropriate. But his implicit assumption of consistent and coherent economic and strategic purposes behind American policy, while it has been shared by economic determinists and devil theorists, hardly squares with the documentary materials increasingly becoming available. An examination of the three volumes on *Franklin D. Roosevelt and Foreign Affairs* recently published by the Harvard University Press from the presidential papers in the Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park shows, I think, how confused, vague and unfocused American policy really was before 1941. (Why, incidentally, should a private university press have been permitted to publish these materials edited by a government archivist as part of his official duties before various scholars presumably may have seen them? The administration of our presidential libraries is puzzling to say the least.) It is both legitimate and revealing for Chomsky to attack American policy by taking the terms upon which American foreign policy has been defended and argue the Japanese case from that standpoint. But for him to present a caricature, often by implication, of American policy seriously distorts the important argument he is making. In any case, the revolutionary pacifism of *Muste*, with which the argument begins and ends, is almost lost among the impassioned paragraphs of this methodologically disturbing essay.

It is with some relief, then, that I turn to Hans Morgenthau's new book. And Morgenthau, who continues to be a tough realist in international affairs while increasingly accepting the central significance of moral issues, does not in the end disappoint. Unfortunately, like so many political scientists, he here takes the meaning of the "national interest" virtually for granted. Is it military security? Prestige? American credibility among other nations? Influence over the course of events elsewhere? And what proportions of the various factors make up the amalgam? Morgenthau has himself discussed those questions elsewhere, but in this volume he assumes agreement on their answers. Yet if this normative analysis is understandably vague on definition, its prescriptions for action (except in the case of the United Nations) are not.

Morgenthau's plea is essentially for national self-knowledge and governmental self-control. Limitations of commitments in Asia, caution in Europe, restraint in nuclear competition, these recommendations go

along with pleas for the reassessment of the assumptions upon which policy has been based. He is not the first to discover that economic aid programs administered through native oligarchies that would suffer from genuine reform are not likely to be effective. But he makes his point coolly, without shrillness, in a way that might make those who should listen more likely to do so. His logic, too, is brought to life by a sense of history that demonstrates, by contrast, the frightening inadequacies of the behavioral theorists who have convinced themselves that their games — like those of Zbigniew Brezezinski with his technetronic society — have a direct relationship to the facts of real life.

A new foreign policy for the United States is clearly and agonizingly imperative. However one may be moved by Noam Chomsky's often brilliant insights and his moral commitment, his passion hardly offers a useful guide to how the change may be achieved. On the other hand, Morgenthau's *A New Foreign Policy for the United States*, no matter how much one might reject its theoretical framework, if it were read in Washington as well as on college campuses, might help us begin to extricate ourselves from the stale slogans and senseless actions that have plagued American policy since at least the middle fifties. How good it would be if we could believe that we have the capacity to learn from past mistakes.

Henry R. Winkler

LEVELING

BEYOND ALL THIS FIDDLE: ESSAYS 1955-1967. By A. Alvarez. Random House. \$8.95.

Of Alvarez one might say what he does of V. S. Pritchett: "He keeps his standards so high while performing so regularly that we tend to take him for granted." Just turned forty, Alvarez is a good generation younger than Pritchett, and these essays certify that he is, as he wants to be, more "serious" than even the best of his elders. To be "serious" includes avoiding Pritchett's "humanist fault," making "too many allowances, as though loath to hurt the feelings of some poor, dead author or deader book." And yet Alvarez isn't by any means as ruthless as he asserts; he avoids the hollow abusiveness of lesser British journalists — Muggeridge, Brigid Brophy — at worst slighting rather than insulting the old fogies of literature. His criticism has a positive force: the art that brings out the best in him is the kind that assaults the boundaries of life. Thus, he writes well on Keats, whom he sees as using poetry to fashion an understanding of and even a desire for death, and Lawrence, when "the imminence of death sharpened his life

till it hurt" and Camus, living his life backwards, "consenting to his death in order to properly, knowingly, live now"; and centrally on Sylvia Plath, about whose death and last poems he writes brilliantly and with deep personal feeling.

Alvarez is in the best tradition of intellectual British journalism, and it is a mark of his quality that he is profoundly restive in it. No one is more aware than he of the danger of "relentless brightness" (for which he sympathizes with Tynan), or of "snobbishness," by which he means snuggling in with "successful young executives who still guiltily remember their university training." But he exploits the advantages of the brief, adventurous critical foray: The posture of a knowledgeable amateur contemptuous of specialized nitpicking, accepting the charge to connect literature with all other aspects of culture, and maintaining an aggressively personal voice that is, as it should be, a little outrageous or even sometimes wrong—but never sounding like *The New York Times*.

The title of one of Alvarez's earlier books, *Under Pressure: the Writer in Society* (a collection of interviews on BBC), indicates his values. He looks in literature as in life for a fundamental engagement with reality—chiefly, in the absence of believable historical events, death. What disgusts him is a talented writer like Ronald Firbank



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flirting with important tensions just below the level of social chatter but using his considerable artistry to obscure them. To talk about Firbank at all, he has first to discharge a splendid stream of contempt — “that coddled, wealthy *flaneur*, the darling of the Sitwells . . . the squirming, giggling shyness, the gossip, the absolute snobbery, the neurotic preciousness and drunken Catholic homosexuality . . . the most tiresome tradition of English eccentricity.” Then he can consider the bare possibility of tragic implications in his work — “attenuated moods, nerves, and semi-religious languishings . . . his equivalent of a sense of tragedy.” Finally, Alvarez remains unimpressed: making a gallant effort to give Firbank a fair trial in the court of seriousness, he actually announces by contrast his own admirable literary criteria.

In another fine essay he also convicts Jean-Paul Sartre. He explains Sartre’s persistent unsatisfactoriness as proceeding from a childhood in the household of his adoring widowed mother and pompous grandfather, who insisted that the world reflect only himself. Though Freud runs deep in Alvarez’s criticism, this is his most overtly psychological interpretation. Convincingly, he infers from Sartre’s writing a guilt derived from his father’s early death, the equivalent of an Oedipal impulse too easily realized. Then, forced to be a precocious child to satisfy the projections of a narcissistic and doting household, Sartre is seen as defending himself by transforming himself from the child manipulated into the child manipulating: clever, outrageous, fantastic because of the vivid, almost psychotic fantasy life that accompanied his guilty play acting, he satisfied his audience even as he stood cynically superior. So began a career in which the feelings were all wrong, misplaced, a career that succeeded by bewildering the self in a house of mirrors — not art but a “schizophrenia of brilliance.”

This explanation of Sartre’s bad-boyism again reveals Alvarez’s insistence on the urgency of confronting “reality,” one component of which is the writer’s inner self — a core of honest reactions, not only liberated from coterie and chic, but also stripped of self-deception. Literature, then, is the vehicle of an expanding self moving toward extremes of being. And if one component of Alvarez’s “reality” is a continuing search for the self, another is the necessity for the artist-critic to be responsible to modern culture. In this respect his acknowledged master is Matthew Arnold, and predictably, among contemporary critics, he responds to the social-cultural concerns of Lionel Trilling and Edmund Wilson. Speaking of a writer in the same tradition, Norman Podhoretz, he formulates the ideal relation between the intellectual and Culture (one in which he finds Podhoretz somewhat deficient). He proposes a special responsibility for the intellectual Jew, because “lacking

a belief in an after-life, Judaism is, after all, *the* worldly religion: it centers on patriarchal authority and the intricacies of family piety; its ten commandments are a social code. At the core of it all are twin concepts of respect and responsibility. And this puts a great weight of justification on the gifted Jew, a disturbing certainty that talent, cleverness and success are not in themselves enough; one must also contribute to and maybe alter, however little, the moral climate in which one lives." Like Arnold, Alvarez sees dehumanization as the main threat to modern life, its nightmare extreme the concentration camp. The threat exists everywhere, maybe even especially in the dominant modern art form, cinema: for films are the products of a corporate, commercial, highly technological effort, heavily Jewish in personnel. They are dangerously close to representing Jewish irresponsibility to Culture. But even poetry tends to get cut off from the human world, to become either a manufacturing of objects for a tiny group of professional connoisseurs, or worse, for the mills of academic criticism, a vicious form of "humanistic technology."

Though Alvarez constantly denies that he is nostalgic for specific moments in history when a more humane culture existed — "to be nostalgic for values and ideals wholly outside your experience is, in the end, a form of snobbery" — a nostalgia is clearly felt in most of these essays. Despising the usual ideal of pre-World War I England, its stable life and its "gentility," — he looks back fondly to the moment of Modernism in the thirties when the great voices of Eliot and Pound and the early Leavis sounded strongly, when the Establishment writers, the "House of Lords," could be satisfyingly dismissed in favor of the major figures, who now constitute a too readily accepted orthodoxy. Alvarez's delight in imagining the thirties, and by implication his dissatisfaction with the current lack of clear causes and choices lights up his prose: "[In 1936] sensitivity and intelligence no longer seemed mutually exclusive — the great Cambridge epoch when all the intellectual disciplines were being reordered. It was the epoch of Principles: the Principles of Mathematics, of Ethics, of Literary Criticism. Its tone was analytical, quizzical, tough-minded and blandly determined — determined, that is, to explain things rationally and have done with nonsense, hostility and incomprehension." This is Alvarez projecting himself into a time when one could get, in Marianne Moore's phrase, "beyond all this fiddle."

But where to go now? Longing to offer allegiance, Alvarez finds himself culturally levitated. Yes, he is a Jew, proud of it, and proud of what he takes to be the special responsibility of Jews (in admiration of Sylvia Plath he thinks her best works come when she accepts herself as an honorary Jew); but he shares the Jew's special isolation, and in

addition feels isolated from the great events that have shaped his times: he finds it hard to locate himself within events significant enough to justify the reaction he longs to give. Thus he talks eloquently about the literature of the concentration camps, about the way those who write it and those who immerse themselves in it “stir mud from the bottom” of their psyches, expose themselves to paranoia and suicide; yet beneath his talk is regret that his reaction is late and to the *literature* of the camps rather than the experience in them. In the lives of writers he admires he searches out crucial events that forge their distinction: Robert Graves’s horror at World War I, Robert Lowell’s acceptance of himself in a mental hospital, Sylvia Plath’s confrontation with her “violent unease.” But there is no detectable equivalent of these moments in Alvarez himself. Only the effort to seek them out is there; he himself feels only possible, unrealized identifications. He regrets that for him World War II was not an event but a condition: “My own generation, for instance — ten at the start of the war — grew up too late.” Though he mastered Oxford (like everything else), and took a First, he never felt part of its monkishness and genteel attitudinizing. Nor is he comfortable in what he calls the “bland Metropolitan knowingness” of London and New York. A British poet, he hankers for the national urgency available to Americans; but yet he chides Auden for copping out, adopting America, and “channeling his deep neurotic disturbances into light verse.” He writes a brilliant essay on New York, perhaps because it is a kind of metaphor for his excitement and unease at not belonging. Certainly he has trouble in defining his Englishness — envying the (apparently easier) West-to-East translation of T. S. Eliot and Sylvia Plath, sympathizing with R. P. Blackmur, who he says went to England at the end of his life only to be disappointed by the lack of “all those Jamesian subtleties the place no longer had.”

The problem is that no nation, religion, or tradition can contain the “reality” Alvarez seeks. What is impressive about him is precisely the quest for something to be continually responsible to. He says of the Beatles: “At the Royal Command Performance or the British Embassy in Washington they still behave as though they might at any moment be held answerable to one of those unimpressed toughies they were brought up with in Liverpool.” A beautiful insight into the Beatles —and into Alvarez too, who wasn’t brought up with Liverpool toughies but, nevertheless, is determined to keep their faith.

Daniel F. Howard

ADA OR NADA

ADA OR ARDOR: A FAMILY CHRONICLE. By Vladimir Nabokov. McGraw-Hill. \$8.95.

The nearly unanimous chorus of acclaim with which *Ada* has been greeted can perhaps be accounted for by a lack of self-confidence among its readers, an uncritical reverence for what is difficult and boring. Having struggled through the book and found it nearly as long and hard as those of Proust or Joyce, the intimidated reader concludes that it must be as good. Once the dull job of reading it is over, the book is fun to figure out. A puzzle, however, is not the same thing as a novel.

At least in intent, *Ada* is certainly a major work, an attempt to write the quintessential novel, to hypostatize in ultimate form the conventions of its greatest subject, romantic love. Its incestuous lovers, Ada and Van, are "a unique, super-imperial couple," emblematic in their beauty, brilliance, and high degree, and embellished with faults that are more like virtues — insatiable sexual appetites and a lordly contempt for others in which the rest of the world can only acquiesce, in view of their stunning qualifications. As everyone must know by now, the book is full of literature, and Van and Ada are well aware of the tradition they represent. Ada in particular is self-conscious about being a girl in a book and likes to preface her remarks with such phrases as "Speaking as a character in an old novel . . ." She calls Van "*mon cher René*" after the young man who loves his sister in Chateaubriand's romance, and for some reason compares herself to Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park*.

The novel is set on a planet called Demonía, or anti-Terra, a sort of fraternal twin of Terra, our earth, in the province of Estotiland, located about where Canada is on our globe and populated by settlers of Russian, Irish and French descent. Fabulously wealthy Russo-Irish aristocrats, ostensibly cousins but really siblings (not half siblings, as some reviewers have said: both are offspring of the liaison between Demon Veen and Marina Durmanova), Van and Ada Veen become lovers during a summer at Ardis Hall, the Veen estate, when he is fourteen and she is only twelve. Ada and Ivan are eventually discovered by their father and turned out of their incestuous Eden. Van divides his mature years between debauchery and psychiatry until at last Ada is restored to him at fifty, to live happily ever after, collaborating with him in her nineties on his memoirs, the book we read.

In spite of its fairy-tale geography and genealogy, Demonía is not quite nowhere; in its tricks with time and space, its mixture of Russia

and America, past and present, reality and art, it is plainly a fanciful correlative of the author's own experience. It incorporates above all the world of his childhood, and in this respect *Ada* is a fictionalized version of *Speak, Memory*, Nabokov's autobiography. In *Speak, Memory*, as in *Ada*, there is a ubiquitous dachshund, a young man who can walk on his hands, a herbarium in an attic, and a little girl who takes lessons in natural science. The real world destroyed these things and what they represented — the happiness of childhood and the life style of the nineteenth-century Russian aristocracy; Demonica recreates them in the stylized and indestructible forms of art. Thus Vyra, the lovely country house of *Speak, Memory*, becomes Ardis, which first appears "on the gentle eminence of old novels," overlooking "an abstract meadow with two tiny people in cocked hats conversing not far from a stylized cow."

Nabokov has apparently always been fascinated by phenomena of duplication and reflection, and on Demonica, itself a reflection, resemblance is the basic structural motif. Van and Ada, the principal pair, are further reflected in a proliferation of von Wiens and van Veens, of Vandas, Vanyas Adulas and Adoras. "Some law of logic," writes Van, "should fix the number of coincidences in a given domain, after which they cease to be coincidences and form, instead, the living organism of a new truth." The maximum has been exceeded here, and the truth concerns the way the mind perceives. Nabokov has said that there are no doubles in his books; indeed, Van is "one" pronounced in his mother's "double-you-less" Russian accent. Obviously the author himself stands at the end of the receding series of anagrams and doubles: Van Veen — V.V. — is Vladimir Vladimirovich; Veen is V.N. But in another and related sense, the doubles and reflections, including the Van-Ada pair, are metaphors, and the relationship they represent is that between the perceiver and the perceived, between the mind and reality. Demonica is the universe of meaningful human experience; in recognizing its cunning design, its multiplicity of twins and simulacra all reducible to its own single figure — one — the mind seizes the design of creation and finds itself at the center of the design. It is a subjective idealist and monistic version of the world, in which the absolute necessity of one's own existence is affirmed and the contingent and the relative are eliminated. Like the stylization of character and event, this imposition of a repeated design on experience is an effort to rescue it from time and chance and give it the perfection of a man-made object, to make of it something as hard, as self-contained, and as entirely artificial as Yeats's golden bird.

The principal metaphor in the novel for the identity of mind and

reality is incest. Reunited with his sister, almost his twin, Van achieves the perfect containment of mind and body within its own reverse counterpart. The division between subject and object is healed, lost time is found, Paradise is regained. The world was made for man's pleasure, as the mysterious beauties of duplication and correspondence in its design affirm.

In discussing a work as complex and ambitious as *Ada*, there is a temptation to substitute the conception of the work for the work itself. In fact, the book is considerably less interesting and attractive than the idea it adumbrates. There are pages that are almost impossible to read, that the eye rolls down like a marble without taking anything in, not because they are difficult, but because the difficulty seems so silly and pointless. The prose is intolerably overdecorated, its forward movement clogged and impeded with trilingual puns, French and Russian phrases translated in parentheses, asides to the reader or the typist, and comments by the editor or by Ada herself, whose style is even more bloated than Van's. The alliteration and wordplay which have always given Nabokov's prose a kind of cut-glass brilliance are here exaggerated to the point of an art nouveau *horror vacui*. And if the theme of *Ada* is grand, its plot is rather slight; there is not really enough story to go around — only the passion of Van and Ada, which remains the same from beginning to end. Most of the episodes which elaborate on this motif, such as Van's violent encounters with Ada's other lovers, are purely parodistic. They make no attempt at credibility, reflect no psychological evolution, and are without emotional resonance.

Language itself is in some way the subject of the book. "Thank Log!" the characters exclaim, or "Good Log!" as if logos, the word, were God. But by and large the tricks with language, the puns and wordplays, are just not very good. The transpositions of persons and places from earth to Demonia are especially flat and unfunny: the English Channel becomes the Chunnel, DeGaulle is Lord Goal, Roosevelt is Old Felt, and Freud is Dr. Froid of Signy-Mondieu-Mondieu or Dr. Sig Heiler.

The main result of the forest of allusions, puns and alienating devices is to foreclose any possibility of the reader's involvement. The characters and events are so consistently given the brittle shell of self-parody that they end by repelling interest and attention.

Perhaps the most curious failure of *Ada* is that of its aestheticism. In spite of its consistent presentation of experience in the forms of art, the novel never achieves the independent existence of an artifact; Demonia remains tied to a Terra of angry controversy and opinion. At

its center is an unabashed self-indulgence, a collection of the tics and prejudices of a very familiar V.N. There are the usual animadversions on inept translators, with Wallace Fowlie even singled out by name, the vulgarly reductionist diatribes against Freud, and, of course, V.N.'s favorite message — that art should have no message. These opinions appear in Nabokov's other books, but less directly expressed, embedded in a richer texture; in the thin air of *Ada*, the crotchets of the author seem rather bleakly exposed. The critical and analytic powers thus revealed are not very impressive. In dealing with ideas, Nabokov offers little more than the self-conscious eccentricity and invincible arrogance of the precocious adolescents he is writing about.

There are, of course, wonderful things in *Ada*, passages of extraordinary charm and beauty. Most of them deal with Ada herself, with "her pale, voluptuous, impermissible skin, her hair, her legs, her angular movements, her gazelle-grass odor . . ." "Even her bare limbs were so free from suntan that one's gaze, stroking her white shins and forearms, could follow upon them the regular slants of fine dark hairs, the silks of her girlhood." This is the familiar tender anatomization of the downy-armed nymphet; the focus is close, the vision is that of the naturalist engaged in detailing the small beauties under his microscopic eye.

Nabokov's gift is for the creation of these small-scale effects, rather than for larger structures. His best books, among them *Pnin*, *Lolita* and *Speak, Memory*, have relatively little of the anagrammatic hide-and-seek and fussy pedantry that usurp the center of later and apparently more ambitious works such as *Pale Fire* and *Ada*. They are certainly not powerful, all-encompassing visions like those of Proust and Joyce; in fact, their structure seems slight and rather negligible. They are held together primarily by a sensibility — a texture of delicately perceived sensuous particulars, of radiant moments of poetic feeling tempered by a dandified wit; their affective core is nostalgia, the poignant sense of a lost past. Such a core of feeling exists in *Ada*, but it is lost beneath a grotesquely elaborated "structure" which remains largely superficial. The book is a bit like a seashell, extravagantly involuted, knobbed, covered with all kinds of random incrustations. What is most striking about it is the fantastic disproportion between that hard external carapace and the small living creature inside it.

Elizabeth Dalton

CONTEMPORARY NONSENSE

CHICAGO (CS-T) — U.S. Attorney Thomas A. Foran says he has contempt for the Chicago Seven.

"Bobby Seale had more guts and more charisma than any of them," Foran said. "And he was the only one I don't think was a fag."

Coming in for hard knocks were defendants Abbie Hoffman, who Foran said was "scummy but clever"; David T. Dellinger, who he said was a "sneak and uses people like a ventriloquist"; the defense attorneys, whom he called "mouthpieces," and some members of the press.

Foran expressed particular annoyance at newspaper coverage of his cross-examination of Rennie Davis.

"It was the hardest cross-examination I've ever had," Foran said. "That kid is as smart as a whip, but after 2½ days I got him to admit he had come to Chicago to discredit the government.

Foran said it had been a "superhuman effort" for him to keep his temper in the courtroom.

He said that he had been continually subjected to insults by Davis.

"I was his man," Foran said. "He'd sit near me and keep whispering insults to me all day about my sexual prowess."

Foran closed with a call for action by parents to save the younger generation.

"We've lost our kids to the freaking fag revolution," he said, "and we've got to reach out for them.

"Our kids don't understand that we don't mean anything by it when we call people niggers," he concluded. "They look at us then like we're dinosaurs when we talk like that."

(*New York Post*, February 27, 1970.)

"DO YOU REGRET THE DAY YOU WERE BORN?"

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(*From a poster at the Rochester Institute of Technology.*) Contributed by Kathleen MacDonald, Rochester, New York.

MRS. NIXON BEGINS COLLEGE TOUR

WASHINGTON (UPI) — First Lady Pat Nixon began a five-day cross-country trip to salute unsung college students who work within the system to improve the establishment.

Most of her stops will be off-campus on the tour which will include visits to the University of Kentucky, the University of Cincinnati, the

University of Colorado at Boulder and the School of the Ozarks on the Missouri-Arkansas border.

(*The Patriot Ledger*, March 2, 1970.) Contributed by Davis Herron, Milton, Massachusetts.

AGNEW TELLS THE THAIS TO IGNORE U.S. CRITICS

(*The New York Times*, January 5, 1970.)

SAIGON POLICEMAN CITED FOR HONESTY

REGIME GRANTS HONOR MEDAL FOR REFUSAL OF \$10 BRIBE

(*The New York Times*, February 5, 1970.)

LINDSAY, AS PARENT, VOICES CONCERN ON MARIJUANA

"WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED" IF DAUGHTERS TRIED IT, HE SAYS AT PARLEY WITH SAMUELS

"You see a lot of kids who don't drink any more but are always happy," the spokesman said. "It's a problem all over the nation, and we're in the mainstream."

(*The New York Times*, February 10, 1970.) Contributed by William Mather Boardman, New York, N. Y.

So far I have found the magazine biased since it covers research done only by a selected group of psychologists who seem to be refugees from Germany and other Nazi and Communist-controlled areas but includes none of the research that has been done by American psychologists whose works are being filed under Occult in book stores and libraries throughout the country. . . .

Unless you can give a more accurate account of the broad spectrum of research that has been done I shall not renew my subscription and my feeling at the present time is that you are simply using U.S. mails as a means of supporting Communism in the United States. . . .

(*Psychology Today*, Letters to The Editor, February, 1970.) Contributed by Kenneth Merin, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

[RE MR. CARSWELL]

"Even if he were mediocre, there are a lot of mediocre judges and people and lawyers, and they're entitled to a little representation, aren't they We can't have all Brandeises, Frankfurters, and Cardozos," [said] Sen. Roman L. Hruska (R.-Neb.).

(*The New York Times*, March 22, 1970.)

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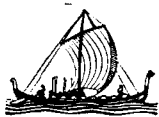
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